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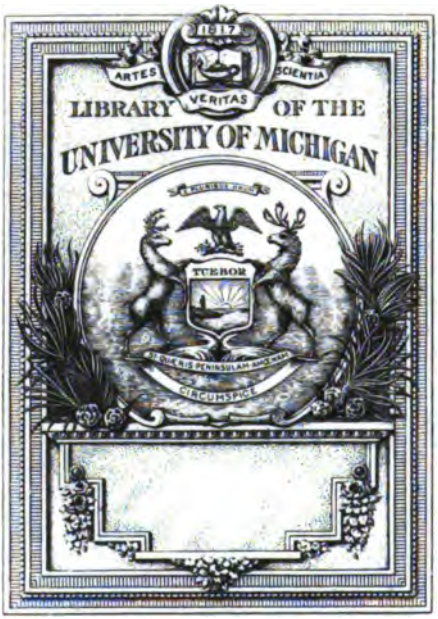

THE GIFT OF
Dean Joseph A. Bursley

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1992
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The Works of

CHARLES PAUL DE KOCK

With a General Introduction by

JULES CLARETIE

MONSIEUR DUPONT

Translated into English by

MARY HANFORD FORD

VOLUME I

THE FREDERICK J. QUINBY COMPANY

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CHAPTER I

The Moutonnet Family. Middle-Class Portraits

It was Sunday; they were dancing in the wood at Romainville, on the space before the keeper's lodge. Probably they were also dancing elsewhere, because it was beautiful weather; because the promenades had been very much crowded, both in the city and in the country; and because on days of rest it is customary for people, especially those who work hard all the week, to fatigue themselves as much as possible. But we are interested only in the bal champêtre which was in progress at Romainville. A violin, a clarinet and a big drum furnished the music for the dancing and kept the inhabitants of the neighborhood skipping; and even those of Belleville, Ménilmontant, of Noisy-le-Sec and the vicinity, who all hastened to the ball at Romainville, which had the preference over the others, thanks to the tunefulness of its orchestra, to the good humor of its keeper, who was also a purveyor of refreshments, and to the vicinity of the wood, which is never considered a disadvantage.

Petticoats fluttered, legs trembled, fichus rose

and fell, and faces were flushed. The fine dancers perspired and struggled, bestowing occasional kicks upon their neighbors; but the pleasure of the exercise prevented these from being felt. To dance well in the village, one must jump high and long; a zephyr of the drawing-room would make a melancholy figure at a village ball, where one is not content to walk about gracefully and have pretty manners.

The young peasant girls wore their charming light dresses and lace caps, and some had on their silk aprons, which are as much of a luxury for them as is a French cashmere for a bourgeoise, or an India cashmere for a woman of a different class. Pleasure shone on every face. Those who danced did it with all their might, and those who looked on promised themselves the next square dance, and already enjoyed it in anticipation.

Some Paris people mingled with the peasants. The little shop girls, who had come out walking with their sweethearts, did not disdain this village ball. Some stout mammas, seated all the week at their counters, teased and enticed their husbands to undertake at least one figure; and these gentlemen yielded after much entreaty; and, once set going, nothing could stop them. The shopmen turned to the dance in search of the prettiest faces, and the old libertines of Paris prowled like wolves in the wood, in search of that which would please them better.

At some little distance from the ball, in the midst of the wood, which seemed like the centre of an amphitheatre, a numerous company of people was seated on the grass, or, rather, on the sand; napkins were spread upon the ground and covered with patés, pie, cold meat, and fruit. Bottles were placed to cool, glasses were filled and emptied rapidly; the collation was dainty, and appetite and the fresh air made everything taste good. They formed plates of paper; they sent bits of pie and sausage flying through the air; they ate, they drank, they sang, they laughed, they played tricks; each rivalled the other in provoking fun. It is agreed that everything is permitted in the country, and the bourgeois party gathered in the wood at Romainville acted as though fully aware of this custom.

A stout papa of about fifty years was trying to carve a turkey, and he did not succeed very well. A rosy, buxom little woman, very round in figure, hastened to seize one leg of the roast fowl; she pulled on one side, and the stout papa pulled on the other; the leg came off; the lady fell on the grass in one direction, and the stout gentleman rolled off in another with the remainder of the bird. Everyone burst into laughter, and M. Moutonnet — for that is the name of the stout papa — returned to his place and declared that he would no longer try to carve.

"I knew very well you couldn't succeed at it,"

remarked a tall, hard-looking woman, whose voice matched her constrained and disdainful air. She sat opposite the stout gentleman, and had been quite annoyed when she saw the round little lady come to the aid of M. Moutonnet. "We have been married twenty years, and you never carve at home," she remarked.

"No, dear wife; that is true," said the stout papa, in a submissive tone. He endeavored to calm his dear half by a gentle smile.

"You don't know how to serve spinach, and you cut off too big a piece."

"But, my dear, this is in the country."

"Monsieur, in the country, as in the city, we shouldn't meddle with what we know nothing about."

"You know very well, Madame Moutonnet, I never meddle ordinarily; but today—"

"But today you do just as any other day."

"But, my dear, you forget that this is Saint Eustache."

"Yes, yes; it is Saint Eustache!" cried all the company, and everyone knocked glasses with his neighbor.

"To the health of Saint Eustache! Long live Eustache!"

"To yours, ladies and gentlemen," responded M. Moutonnet, graciously; "and to yours, sweetheart," turning to his wife, who endeavored to put on an especially amiable air, and deigned to

touch her glass to that of M. Eustache Moutonnet, whose birthday was being celebrated in the woods at Romainville.

M. Eustache Moutonnet was a rich lace dealer of Rue Saint Martin, and a man very highly esteemed in commercial circles; for his note had never gone to protest and his word could be strictly depended upon. He had maintained his establishment for thirty years, occupying himself in his business from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening. He kept his own ledger and his daybook; Madame Moutonnet took charge of the correspondence and managed the special sales; the details of the shop and cashbox were intrusted to an old clerk and to Mademoiselle Eugénie Moutonnet, with whom later we shall become better acquainted.

As you have seen, M. Moutonnet was not accustomed to command in his own home. His wife ordered, disposed and regulated everything. When she was in a good humor, which was quite rarely the case, she allowed her husband to go out in the evening and take a glass, on condition that he went to the café on the corner of Rue Mauconseil, because there they gave very large lumps of sugar, and M. Moutonnet could bring three of these home to his wife.

On Sunday they dined a little early, so that they might have time for a walk in the Tuileries or the Turkish gardens. Their excursions to the country

were very rare, and took place only on unusual occasions, like that of the birthday of Monsieur or of Madame Moutonnet.

This regular life did not prevent the stout lace dealer from being the happiest of men. M. Moutonnet was of simple and peaceable tastes. He could be guided and governed like a child. Do not shrug your shoulders at that, you gentlemen who are so proud of your rights and your merits, who believe that you are masters of your actions, who yield daily to your passions, which lead you on and are frequently exceedingly evil guides. M. Moutonnet was not afraid of that; he had no passions; he knew only his obedience to his wife's orders, and had discovered that a man could live in great content even if he did not know how to carve a fowl, and allowed his wife to rule him.

Madame Moutonnet was past forty, but the family understood that she was only to be considered thirty-six. She was not a pretty woman, but she was very tall, and her husband was persuaded that she was a superb creature. She was not a coquette, but she thought she surpassed all others in wit and beauty. She had never been in love with her husband, but had he been untrue to her she would have torn out his eyes. You will perceive that Madame Moutonnet was extremely jealous of her rights.

One daughter only had blessed the marriage of M. Eustache Moutonnet with Mademoiselle

Barbe Désormeaux. This young lady was now eighteen years old, but she resembled neither her father nor mother. Did she go back to some ancestor? I could not for the life of me tell you. Are we not always seeing things that we cannot understand? Why is the son of an imbecile a man of wit? Why do very charming parents have very plain children? Why, since everyone has two eyes, a mouth, a brow, and a nose in the middle of the face, do we not find faces exactly alike? Why is that beautiful at Paris which would be ugly at Pekin? Why does one cry on entering the world, and cry also on leaving it? Why is virtue rarer than vice? Why is evil more common than good? Why does one weep for joy and for rage? Why do we see folly riding in a carriage, and merit going afoot? We might keep on saying why forever, and that would lead us too far from our subject. Let us return to Mademoiselle Eugénie Moutonnet.

As I said, she was eighteen years old. The young ladies of Paris are usually quite independent at eighteen; but Eugénie had been very strictly brought up, and, although she had a natural strength of mind, she was timid, docile and submissive, and never dared make a remark in the presence of her parents. She possessed wit, grace and impressionability; but she was ignorant of all her gifts, and her feelings were hidden in the depth of her heart. She was not a coquette,

or at least she seldom dared to yield to the inclination so natural to women of seeking to please and to appear pretty. But Eugénie did not need to employ the little arts and graces so necessary to others. She was very pretty, and had a charming figure; her eyes were sweet and expressive; her voice was gentle and attractive; her brow was shadowed by waving black hair; her lips parted over the whitest of teeth. She had, besides, that indescribable gift of pleasing which charms the eye at first sight, and which is often not possessed by beauties of more regular features.

We have now been introduced to all the members of the Moutonnet family. While we are in the mood we may as well make the acquaintance of the rest of the company gathered in the wood to celebrate the fête of Saint Eustache.

The little lady who made such a point of coming to the assistance of M. Moutonnet was the wife of a tall gentleman named Bernard, who had a toy shop in the Rue Saint Denis. M. Bernard was a good-natured, fun-loving man. He laughed, jested, and was the life of the company.

His wife was rather nice-looking, and a little vain. Her clothes were tight enough to suffocate her, and it took her an hour to get on her shoes, because she absolutely must have a tiny foot. Her face was perhaps a trifle highly colored; but her eyes were very expressive, and she always wished to have a little mischief in her glance.

Madame Bernard had a tall daughter of fifteen years; but she dressed her still as if she were not more than eight, because she wished to make her as childish as possible; she was always given dolls to play with, and never allowed to call her mother anything but "little mamma."

Near Madame Bernard was seated a young man of eighteen years, whose manner was almost as timid as that of Eugénie, and who blushed whenever anyone spoke to him, though he had been six months in business. He was the son of M. Bernard's partner, and Madame Bernard had undertaken to form his manners and introduce him to society.

Near Eugénie was seated a man of forty years, with what one would call a stupid face. M. Dupont — for that was his name — was a rich grocer, whose place was on Rue aux Ours. He wore powder and a queue, because he thought it becoming, and his barber told him that this manner of dressing his hair gave him a very distinguished appearance. His sky-blue coat, and a waistcoat of daffodil yellow, gave him a simple and unworldly air, which seemed quite fitting to the look of constant surprise in his rather prominent eyes. He was always playing with two watch chains which swung over his nankeen trousers, and he never spoke without listening to the sound of his own voice, and believing himself extremely witty and perfectly irresistible. He had all the self-satisfac-

tion of foolishness, supported by a long bank account; and, since he was a bachelor, he was much esteemed and sought after in all the households where there were marriageable daughters.

Monsieur and Madame Gérard, perfumers of Rue Saint Martin, were also of the company. The perfumer played the gallant gentleman, and he had the reputation in his part of the city of being a terribly dangerous fellow where women were concerned. You never would have suspected it, for he was homely, had a bad figure, and was cross-eyed; but he believed that he could overcome all these defects by covering himself with perfumes and odors. You could always smell him a quarter of an hour before you saw him.

His wife was young and pretty. She had married at fifteen, and she had a boy of nine who was always taken for her little brother. The young Gérard yelled, jumped, broke bottles and glasses, and made almost as much noise alone as did the entire company.

"He is a lion," said M. Gérard. "I recognize myself in him. At his age, you could never hear yourself think, when I was near; but I was considered charming. My son is an exact portrait of myself."

The sister of M. Gérard was a spinster of forty-five, who was fond of declaring that she had never wished to marry; but she sighed each time that M. Dupont glanced at her. She sat next M.

Moutonnet. The old clerk of the lace merchant, M. Bidois, who never spoke until he was sure that Madame Moutonnet permitted it, and who poured himself a fresh glass whenever he saw that no one was looking at him, sat next to Mademoiselle Cécile Gérard, and, though she swore constantly that she would not marry, as she detested men, she was in a very bad humor because old Bidois was next her, and remarked that Madame Bernard always kept possession of the young people.

The other member of the company, a young man of about twenty, tall and well made, with an attractive face, and a lively and spiritual expression, which indicated that he was born for something better than measuring yards of calico, was seated at the right of Eugénie.

This young man was called Adolphe. He was a clerk in a novelty shop where Madame Moutonnet was accustomed to do business; and, as he had always given her good measure, and treated her with especial courtesy, she invited him to the feast of Saint Eustache. We have now made the acquaintance of all of M. Moutonnet's guests.

CHAPTER II

Domestic Details. The Interior of the Household

The festival of Saint Eustache was an epoch which was very impatiently expected in the home of the lace dealer. Upon such occasions M. Moutonnet's household was in a state of the greatest and most pleasurable excitement; even Madame Moutonnet was willing that everyone should assume a joyous air. Eugénie generally learned a new song which she sang for her father on this day, and she always gave him a little birthday gift of a purse she had embroidered herself, or a napkin ring, or a tobacco pouch; and every time that the good Moutonnet received his daughter's little present, tears of appreciation moistened his eyelids.

Madame Moutonnet also gave her husband a present; but as order and economy inspired all her actions, so her offering ordinarily consisted of something useful, usually some addition to his wardrobe — either socks, or handkerchiefs, or waistcoats. But, no matter how commonplace the gift, M. Moutonnet was, or at least professed to be, ravished and enchanted with it. Had his

wife given him only a pinch of snuff, he would have expressed the same degree of rapture. The good man had his reasons for expressing contentment.

M. Bidois made no gift in honor of Saint Eustache. He kept his little economies for the feast of Sainte Barbe, who was the patron saint of Madame Moutonnet. The old clerk was a born courtier; he did not fail to pay his compliments to Eustache, but he never forgot to speak in the same breath of the qualities and graces of Madame Moutonnet.

As a reward, he was invited to the picnic party, and as Madame Moutonnet did not wish to leave the house alone, because there had been thieves in the neighborhood, and therefore did not take the maid, he was requested to carry two huge baskets, under the weight of which he groaned and perspired. He dared not complain, but must appear lively, and even gay, at least when Madame Moutonnet glanced in his direction.

On the eve of the great day, Madame Moutonnet, having invited the guests herself, and made all the preparations according to her own taste, condescended to tell her husband something of her plans. As he was folding his napkin after dinner, to return to the ledger, she stopped him.

"Monsieur Moutonnet, tomorrow is the feast of Saint Eustache," she said, with almost an amiable air.

"Why, so it is," replied the lace dealer. He tried his best to appear surprised, although for the last ten days he had looked at his barometer every morning to see if there were a chance of good weather for his birthday. "Is it possible that tomorrow is the twentieth?"

"Of course, monsieur, as today is the nineteenth of September."

"That's right, dear wife."

"I never forget these occasions, monsieur."

"You are very good, Madame Moutonnet. You know that I try to remember Sainte Barbe also. My heart—"

"It is not a question of Sainte Barbe, monsieur. We celebrate Saint Eustache tomorrow."

"That's right, my dear."

"I have arranged a little picnic in the woods at Romainville. Will that suit you, monsieur?"

"Will it suit me? That is charming. In the woods at Romainville!—you know I love to go there.

This charming wood
For lovers good—"

"There is no question of lovers, Monsieur Moutonnet. You are always doing something foolish."

"My dear, this is the effect of Saint Eustache."

"Will you be silent, monsieur?"

A severe glance reminded M. Moutonnet that his daughter was sitting near him, and that it was

not proper for her to hear anything about lovers. The dear man became silent, and his wife continued, —

"I have invited a number of friends for to-morrow, and I have tried to select a pleasant company. I think you will be satisfied with my choice."

"My dear, I am always satisfied."

"Don't interrupt me, Monsieur Moutonnet. If you keep interrupting me every moment how can I ever finish?"

"That's right, my dear."

"This will be our party: There will be, first, our three selves and M. Bidois. I shan't take Jeanneton; M. Bidois will carry the baskets."

"Yes, madame," said the old clerk, forcing a smile to hide the grimace he had made at the word "baskets."

"I warn you, Bidois, that they will perhaps be a little heavy tomorrow, for we shall be a large party; and, except the bread and the wine, which we will purchase of the keeper, I shall take everything myself; but you are strong and pretty active."

"And then I can relieve him sometimes," said M. Moutonnet.

"No, no, monsieur; I will not hear of that; I will not have you fatigue yourself on your birthday morning, or you will be fit for nothing in the evening."

"That's right, my dear."

"To return to our party, we shall have Monsieur and Madame Bernard, their daughter Mimi, and their little clerk, Estève. M. Bernard is very amiable, and full of wit and gayety. When he is anywhere he sets everything going, and that is what we want. If I had no one but you, Monsieur Moutonnet, to entertain my company —"

"But, wife, it seems to me —"

"Chut! To continue: Madame Bernard is far from possessing her husband's wit; however, she has so much pretension that she must always put in her word. After all, each one has his defects in this world, and, if it were necessary to know only perfect people, one would remain at home alone. I vow it gives me pain to see how Madame Bernard tries to make herself slender by lacing so tightly that she can hardly breathe. It makes me feel suffocated to look at her. What folly, at thirty-eight years, at least! Besides, she never had a good figure. Then her daughter, who is fifteen, and whom she still compels to play with a doll, — that big Mimi, who should have been at a counter these three years past. But, after all, it is her mother's wish."

"It is true, she is very ridiculous," murmured old Bidois, who was mending a pen, and kept his eyes fixed upon his penknife. Madame Moutonnet threw him a look of approbation and resumed her discourse.

"Bidois is very right; she has no common sense; and the way in which Madame Bernard has brought up her daughter! Above all, I beg you, Monsieur Moutonnet, not to go aside from the rest of the company with Madame Bernard, under the pretext of looking for strawberries; that will not please me. Do you hear?"

"My dear, I did not know that—"

"You know now, monsieur."

"Besides, there are no strawberries in the wood at Romainville."

"Even though there should be, monsieur, I forbid you to go to look for them with her; besides, she has her clerk, the little Estève, whom I was obliged to invite, since he goes everywhere with them. Truly, if I had been malicious, I might have thought some things.—You're laughing, Bidois?"

Indeed, Bidois had affected a malicious laugh when Madame Moutonnet spoke of the little clerk, and he received from her eye a second glance of approbation.

"There are four persons from one house. Then I have invited our good neighbors of the Rue Saint Martin, the Gérards, their son, and their sister, Mademoiselle Cécile. At least they are stylish and well-mannered, and M. Gérard is very gallant in his attention to the ladies."

"It is a pity that he smells so strong," said M. Moutonnet, half under his breath.

"What, monsieur! he smells strong? Why do you not say that he is like balm, that he perfumes every neighborhood where he stays? He is a travelling sultan, and one must have a very inferior olfactory sense not to be intoxicated with his odors."

"They go to the head, Madame Moutonnet."

"Mon Dieu, monsieur! doesn't that amount to the same thing? If you are going to be fussy about it, I pity you."

"But, wife, I did not say —"

"Oh, well, keep still, and use your lavender water; you are not at all worthy of M. Gérard's superfine pomade."

Here Bidois took a pinch of snuff, and sniffed it for five minutes, as if he were trying to imagine himself in the perfumer's shop.

"So we have the Gérard family," continued Madame Moutonnet, glancing at Bidois, who seemed to sniff in fancy the superfine pomade. "Madame Gérard is a trifle frivolous, a little heedless; but at least she is young, and one can excuse her. Mademoiselle Cécile, her sister, is a very sensible, very reasonable girl. I am really sorry that she cannot succeed in getting married; for, in spite of her pretended aversion for the men, I know very well that the poor girl is dying of spite, because she cannot find a husband. But it must be confessed that with her rather crabbed disposition and her face — it is her

nose especially that is frightful. What a nose, great Heavens! You might excuse it in a man, but in a woman! It is really a very prominent nose."

"It is three inches long," murmured Bidois.

"Oh, three inches,—that is too much," replied Madame Moutonnet; "but it is certainly two. I have not forgotten to invite our friend Dupont. He is a very unusual man, my dear. Oh, he can get a wife wherever he wants one. What a happy fate will be hers when he places her at the head of his household, and what a counter to be mistress of! In his shop the sale lasts from five o'clock in the morning until midnight every day in the week and Sunday. What an agreeable future that offers! What a charming life!"

Madame Moutonnet seemed to dwell with a special emphasis upon these details. While she spoke of her friend Dupont she looked at her daughter, who was working beside the counter; but Eugénie did not seem to pay the slightest attention to the praises bestowed on the grocer; she continued to work without lifting her eyes. The name of M. Dupont did not cause her the slightest emotion.

"This dear Dupont will be sure to come," went on Madame Moutonnet. "He seemed delighted with the invitation. I am sure he is very fond of us, and of our household. Do you not

think so, Monsieur Moutonnet? Have you not noticed this?"

"Yes, my dear; yes, I have noticed it. He sells us excellent coffee; I am sure of that. There is no chicory in it."

"He is one of the largest grocers in Paris," remarked Bidois, erasing a blot which he had just made.

"He is indeed," said Madame Moutonnet, "and he is one of the richest; he is, besides, a charming cavalier. I am sure he will bring us a bottle of liqueur for the dessert."

"Yes, and they will put it in the basket," remarked the old clerk under his breath. "They think nothing is too much for me to carry."

"That is all our company. Oh, no; I forgot M. Adolphe Dalmont, the young clerk from the shop of our neighbor, the novelty merchant."

At this point Eugénie suddenly lifted her eyes, and dropped them again upon her work with a vivid blush; but her hand trembled, her breathing was a little short. The name of Adolphe had disturbed her somewhat. Fortunately, Madame Moutonnet did not look at her daughter, or she would have noticed her excitement.

"I did not intend at first to invite this young man," said Madame Moutonnet, "but I found that we should be thirteen, and you know well that I would not have that fatal number — not on my own account: I am not superstitious; but the

other ladies all are, and I warrant Mademoiselle Cécile would refuse to come to a party of thirteen people, so I decided to invite M. Adolphe. I do not know his family; but M. Duval, with whom he is employed, told me that his father was very well born, and he spoke with high praise of M. Adolphe. The young man is always very polite to me when I go to the shop, and never forgets me if he has a bargain; so there is all your company, Monsieur Moutonnet. Are you pleased with my selection?"

"I am delighted, my dear sweetheart. We will amuse ourselves like kings."

"Jeanneton will roast us a superb turkey and a fine piece of veal, a beautiful pasty, a tongue, a sausage, fruits and cheese."

"That is excellent, my dear wife. And can we also have —"

"What now, monsieur?"

"A fine bottle of muscat."

"We will see about that tomorrow, monsieur."

"Well, now, my dear, were you going to surprise me with that?"

"Never mind, never mind, Monsieur Moutonnet."

"Pardi! they are going to break my back," groaned the old clerk.

"The weather promises to be beautiful, my dear."

"Magnificent, wife."

"And very warm," growled Bidois under his breath.

"We meet here at ten o'clock. Everyone will be in time, and we shall start promptly."

Papa Moutonnet having heard all the details, prepared to seat himself at his desk, but his wife called to him once more.

"Monsieur Moutonnet!"

"Wife."

"Tomorrow is your birthday. You may go and take a glass at the Café Mauconseil; you have worked very hard today."

M. Moutonnet's face became radiant. He took his wife's hand and pressed it with great tenderness. "My darling, you are so good! you are so kind! Jeanneton, my hat, my cane. Oh, I don't know whether I have any money."

"What, Monsieur Moutonnet! I gave you a crown not fifteen days ago."

"That's right, my sweet; but you see we played loto on Sunday with M. Gérard."

"You don't mean to say you lost a whole crown at loto? You have some love affair, Monsieur Moutonnet, that you are spending your money on."

"Oh, my love, my wife."

"Yes, you have. It's not possible you could spend a crown in such a little time otherwise."

"Wait, wait; I will see. Oh, I have still sixteen sous."

"Oh, that's more than enough. You can't spend more than that. Go on, monsieur, and be prudent."

"My darling, I will bring you three lumps of sugar."

"That's good,—thanks. But don't look at the pretty girls on your way; that will be still better."

M. Moutonnet embraced his wife, put his hat on, kissed his daughter on the forehead, and left the shop. He gave himself a little air of somewhat swaggering decision as soon as he was safely out of his wife's presence.

The old Bidois was deep in his calculations. Madame Moutonnet took her place once more at the counter. Eugénie continued her work. She longed to move, to speak, to walk, but she dared not budge until her mother gave her permission. The daughter trembled constantly for fear of her parent's severity.

Presently Madame Moutonnet commanded her to leave her work and go and arrange her dress for the next day. Eugénie did not wait for a repetition of this permission. In a moment she had folded up her sewing and was on the little staircase which led to her chamber. Here she met Jeanneton on her way from the kitchen. Eugénie liked to gossip with the maid, who was a stout, good-natured girl, and very fond of her young mistress; and the latter confided all her troubles, her pleasures and her little secrets to this good

Jeanneton. Every young girl needs a confidante, and this one could not speak freely to her mother, her father never wished her to say anything special to him, for fear of being scolded by his wife, and she could not describe what she felt to old Bidois; it was to the maid alone that she could sometimes open her heart; Jeanneton was a woman, she was young and sympathetic, and that is more than is necessary to inspire trust in a youthful soul.

"Goodness, mamzelle, how happy you look! What's going on in the house?"

"Oh, Jeanneton, don't you know tomorrow is papa's birthday?"

"Well, I ought to know it. I have had to roast the turkey and the veal. But there is no fun for me. I must stay and take care of the house. I'm glad of one thing though, — Bidois will have to carry the bundles, and that will make the old sneak fume."

"Oh, Jeanneton, you are cross. Tell me, is my pretty collarette ironed?"

"Yes, mamzelle, yes."

"I am going to wear my lilac dress, and my straw hat with the new ribbon. Do you think it will be becoming to me?"

"Seems to me mamzelle is thinking more than usual about her looks."

"But, Jeanneton, we are going to have company; there'll be so many there."

"Well, you will be the prettiest, no matter what dress you wear."

"Do you really think so, Jeanneton?"

Eugénie's face assumed an expression of vivid pleasure as she heard Jeanneton's assurance. Her eyes seemed to question her good friend, and ask whether she were only flattering, or whether she spoke her real thought.

"Of course it's true," replied Jeanneton. "Do you think Mimi Bernard can compare with you? — that great silly, who made soap bubbles when she came here; and her mother, whose arms are bigger than my legs, saving your presence; and Madame Gérard, who sickens me with her beef marrow scented with vanilla; and her old sister, who believes that nobody sees she wears a wig."

"Ah, Jeanneton, you shouldn't make fun of them."

"But really they are comical, and the men are still more droll; I don't know which is ugliest — except little Estève; he's not so bad; but he looks like a booby; still, even so, he's the best of them."

"Oh, no, Jeanneton; there will be another who is better than he."

"Another young man?"

"Yes, another young man. I don't know if you have seen him. He comes to the shop sometimes in the morning to speak to mamma. He is a clerk in the novelty shop."

"M. Adolphe? Oh, yes; I know him."

"And don't you think he is very nice? He has such a pleasant manner. He is so refined, so nice and sympathetic. Don't you think so, Jeanneton?"

"Why, goodness, yes, he has a pleasant manner; but as to sympathetic, I don't know so much about that. Well, has he spoken to you?"

"Oh, no, Jeanneton, never! You know very well that I would not speak before mamma. He has bowed to me; that is all. Then he has looked at me, sometimes, with such a sweet expression!"

"Ah, yes; I don't think he would be apt to make faces at you. And is he going to M. Moutonnet's fête tomorrow?"

"Yes, Jeanneton; oh, how we shall enjoy ourselves tomorrow in the woods at Romainville! Ah, poor Jeanneton, how I wish you were going with us!"

"Don't bother yourself; that's all right. You will tell me everything that takes place."

"Oh, yes; I will tell you everything. I love to tell you all I think, dear Jeanneton. Ah, I don't like to talk to mamma in that way; but it is she who told me to look my best tomorrow. It seems to me, Jeanneton, mamma is less severe with me lately. She pays more attention to my clothes; sometimes I am quite surprised at the interest she takes. She likes to see my hair nice and my dress neat."

"Bah! that doesn't surprise me. Listen now, Mamzelle Eugénie. You see you are eighteen, and they are thinking of getting you married. At least, your mother is thinking about it, for your father doesn't bother his head about anything."

"What, Jeanneton! Do you really believe they want me to marry? Heavens, Jeanneton! I must get my dress ready for tomorrow."

Eugénie entered her room, but she forgot to arrange her toilet. She was dreaming, thoughtful. This word "marriage" had made her sigh. It is a very disturbing word to young girls.

Jeanneton went back to the kitchen. "Yes, yes," she murmured, "they are thinking about it. Oh, I have eyes and ears. Poor little thing! They want to get her married, but they haven't selected the young clerk from the novelty shop."

CHAPTER III

Saint Eustache. The Wood at Romainville. The Picnic Dinner

The sun shone, untempered by a single cloud, which announced that it would be very fine and warm on this festival of Saint Eustache, which, upon this particular occasion, fell upon a Sunday, a fact which suited everyone except M. Bidois, who by this circumstance was deprived of a day of rest, for he must necessarily take part in the festivities of the occasion in a manner that was rather irksome to him. But he knew he must make the best of a bad bargain. During the morning the old clerk had gone to the kitchen to estimate the weight of the turkey, of the pasty, and of the roast of veal. He sighed, but consoled himself in thinking that he would eat his share.

M. Moutonnet rose at seven o'clock; by eight o'clock he had shaved; by nine he had taken his café-au-lait; by ten he was entirely dressed, and even had his hat on his head and his cane in his hand, so that no one need wait for him.

Eugénie had also finished her toilet. She came down that she might see her father for a moment, and give him his little present, before the guests

arrived. The young girl was less gay than on the preceding evening. A thousand thoughts agitated her. Each time that the shop door opened she blushed, and felt her heart beat with more than ordinary force. In spite of her preoccupation, however, she found time to glance occasionally into one of the mirrors that ornamented the shop, and the result was highly reassuring.

Bidois carried in two enormous baskets, and placed them on the counter with a piteous air. Madame Moutonnet had not yet come down, and the gentlemen talked, while Eugénie watched the door.

"Well, Bidois, we're going to have a fine day."

"Yes, but it will be suffocatingly hot with such a scorching sun."

"Well, it will be nice in the wood at Romainville; it is always shady and cool there."

"Yes, but it's not very easy to get there; that hill at Belleville is rough."

"Bah! You can ascend that in a quarter of an hour."

"Without doubt; it is nothing if you haven't two enormous baskets to carry. They are heavy, I assure you."

"Ah, the dinner is well prepared."

"If Madame Moutonnet had been willing, I would have borrowed the baker's dog, that great spaniel, which, with a stick between his jaws, carries all that one wishes at each end of it."

"Well, why didn't you ask for the dog?"

"You know your wife detests animals."

"Ah, that's true, Bidois; I didn't think of that. The deuce! I won't propose the dog; it would be better for you to do it. Give me a pinch of snuff, Bidois."

"Do you know, at least, if we shall take a hack as far as the limits?"

"My faith! I don't know, my good fellow. You see we are a large party; we couldn't put fourteen into a hack."

"Oh, the deuce! Let's take two then; that's nothing among six men."

"Very true; do you suggest it to my wife."

"Me? It is rather for you to speak of it."

"Eh? Well, we'll see pretty soon; I'll just say two words."

"I'll wager you won't say a word about it."

"And I tell you, Bidois, I shall speak to her."

"Here comes madame."

At that moment Madame Moutonnet appeared. Immediately Bidois ran to the baskets and put his hands on the handles, while M. Moutonnet twirled his hat upon his cane.

"I see that you are all ready," she said with a satisfied air.

"Yes, my dear; we are quite inclined to go, as you see."

"That is good. I hope the company will not keep us waiting."

"Speak about the carriage," whispered Bidois to M. Moutonnet.

"Presently," replied the lace dealer. "You see that no one has yet arrived; we have plenty of time."

M. Dupont was the first to appear. Eugénie raised her eyes when she heard the door open, but she lowered them again, perceiving that it was only the grocer, though he gave her a most gracious salutation.

"Here I am. I hope I have not kept you waiting."

"No, my friend; you are a charming man."

"It is not yet ten o'clock by Saint Nicholas. Ladies, gentlemen, I hope you are well. Mademoiselle, may I present my respects?"

"My daughter! Do you hear? M. Dupont presents his respects. Why don't you answer?"

"Monsieur is very kind," said the young girl, half under her breath. She courtesied to the grocer, and he believed that in his sky-blue coat and yellow waistcoat she considered him ravishing.

"My daughter is bashful," said Madame Moutonnet to Dupont. "But that is what I desire. Young people should be brought up so. I was educated like that, and you know what kind of a woman I am."

"By Jove!" said Dupont, "you surely are a woman who — M. Moutonnet knows something about it."

"Oh, there is no one equal to my wife in all the Rue Saint Martin."

"No, I'll answer for that," said Bidois, under his breath.

"I have fitted her to be the mistress of a household, and I flatter myself my daughter will also be able to do her part behind a counter."

"Will you permit me to present my little bouquet?" asked Dupont, turning to Madame Moutonnet. As he said this he drew from his pockets a bottle of muscat, and one of anisette, and offered them to Madame Moutonnet.

"Two bottles! Really, Monsieur Dupont, you are very kind; you are extravagant."

"My entire shop is at your service, madame. I shall be only too happy, if you will use it. Ah! here is a little paper of nuts and raisins."

"What! still more? You are overwhelming! Bidois, see that the bottles don't shake."

Bidois did his best to conceal his ill-humor, and he muttered, as he put away the bottles, "They must not shake! I shan't trouble myself. They really take me for a mule. If I was sure of going in a hack as far as the limits," and he made signs to M. Moutonnet, who pretended not to see them.

An odor of vanilla, of tube-roses and of orange-flower water announced the arrival of the Gérard family. The perfumer came tiptoeing into the shop, holding his little son by the hand, and the

youngster climbed upon the counter, and then upon the shoulders of M. Moutonnet, as soon as he was inside the door.

Then the ladies appeared. They embraced one another and said a thousand amiable things with an air of great affection, while all the time their eyes were looking for something to criticise in the toilets or ridicule in the persons of their friends. Eugénie alone did not notice the dress of the others. She was anxious, embarrassed; but still she was happy.

M. Adolphe appeared almost at the same moment as the family of the perfumer.

The young man made a great point of his salutation to Madame Moutonnet and her husband, approaching Eugénie afterward, and murmuring something, she scarcely knew what; for she felt that her mother's eyes were upon her, and she was afraid her agitation would be observed. Eugénie scarcely dared look at Adolphe, although she was dying to do so. Poor Eugénie! The most severe education will not fortify the heart against the assaults of love.

"Well, we are all here except the Bernard family."

"They are late; it is ten minutes after ten."

"Ten o'clock only," said M. Dupont. "I regulated my watch yesterday by the clock of the Palais Royal."

"I was sure of it," said Madame Moutonnet;

"Madame Bernard is never ready; she is never in time."

"That's true," remarked M. Gérard. "You remember on my wife's birthday she kept us waiting on the Feuillants terrace for two hours."

"Yes, yes; because her shoemaker was late, and she would not start without her pink shoes. But, hush! hush! there they are. We will say nothing; it is only a quarter past."

"Here we are!" cried M. Bernard, like a veritable acrobat, as he tumbled into the shop. "I hope you are all in a good humor. I feel as if we were going to have a delightful time. Long live happiness! The children are following me, and while I am waiting I will kiss the ladies."

The children were Madame Bernard, Mimi the daughter, and the little clerk, and they entered at the moment when M. Bernard was embracing Madame Moutonnet.

"So he has already begun," said Madame Bernard. "Take care, ladies; he's more frolicsome today than usual."

"It seems to me that you are quick to notice it," said M. Gérard.

"Oh, it occurs often; he has a cheerful temperament."

"One can easily believe that when near you," and the perfumer drew near Madame Bernard and threw her a tender glance from his left eye, while his right was fixed on M. Moutonnet's wig.

"Let us go; let us go," said Madame Moutonnet.

"Let us go," cried the entire party.

"Are we going?" said Bidois, in a low tone. "But you haven't said anything about the carriage."

"Shall we go on foot, my love?" said the lace dealer, with a submissive air, as he approached his wife.

"Why, monsieur, what a question! Surely in this beautiful weather you don't want to be shut up in a carriage. That would be murder."

"Certainly, my heart, certainly; that would be murder."

"Besides, the wood of Romainville is so very near; we can walk there in two short hours. We shall have plenty of time to rest afterwards."

"Yes, yes," cried everybody; "we will go on foot."

"And we can have all sorts of fun on the way," said Bernard.

"Well, I must make the best of it," said Bidois; and he took a basket on each arm with a deep sigh.

Everybody started joyously. Each sought as companion the person with whom he preferred to walk. Madame Bernard seized the arm of the little clerk Estève. Gérard offered his to Mimi. Adolphe approached Eugénie, and the young girl smiled already at the pleasure before her; but her

mother's voice pronounced these terrible words, "My daughter, accept the arm of Monsieur Dupont."

Indeed, the grocer had kept his arm in the air for five minutes before Eugénie, while he tried to make her understand the pleasure he would have in walking with her; but Eugénie had not heard a word he had said, because she was looking for Adolphe. It seemed to her he could not possibly offer his arm to any other but herself.

Madame Moutonnet's voice dissipated the charm that held her. Eugénie heard the order; she knew that she must obey without resistance. She obeyed therefore; but as she slipped her hand under the grocer's arm, she glanced at Adolphe, and for the rest of the way there was a sorrowful little shade of disappointment on her face. Ah, if Dupont had had the least knowledge of women; if he had not been such a conceited idiot, he would easily have seen what was passing in the girl's heart; but if the grocer saw nothing, Adolphe in his turn had read volumes in Eugénie's glance. He dared not appear discontented, but presented his arm to Madame Gérard, and arranged matters so that he should walk near Eugénie.

The company preserved their dignity as long as they were in the city, but after they had reached the highway and were in the Faubourg du Temple, they ventured to yield to their gayety a little more, and as soon as they had passed the limits

M. Bernard declared that he would not be responsible for himself.

Madame Moutonnet could not prevent her cavalier from dragging her on; he urged her to run and even leap the slight obstacles in their way.

"Your husband is worse than a demon," said Madame Moutonnet to Madame Bernard. "I cannot make him behave."

"Oh, that does not astonish me," cried the toymaker's wife. "When he is out in the country he is like a horse let loose. But we are not yet at Belleville; think what he will be then!"

"You will see even the leaves upside down, ladies."

"Really, that is too much, Monsieur Bernard," exclaimed Madame Moutonnet; "if you say such things I shall be obliged to drop your arm."

Madame Bernard did her utmost to incite little Estève to even a slight recklessness; but the clerk was very awkward, and difficult to rouse, though Madame Bernard kept repeating,—

"Wake up, Estève; you are too timid for a boy. There is nothing more stupid than a timid man."

M. Gérard walked somewhat loiteringly with Mademoiselle Mimi. The perfumer was very fond of young girls, and if this one still played with a doll, she was not a child in the eyes of everyone. She had already a pretty figure, and

the charming outline of her girlish roundness was revealed by the folds of her fichu. Her mouth, which was as fresh as her cheeks, was always smiling. M. Gérard had noticed all this, and he had quickly seized Mimi's arm. The two walked on slowly, so no one could hear what they said; but M. Gérard seemed very animated, and squinted a little more than usual, in his endeavor to cast tender glances at Mimi, who laughed the whole way, because she did not understand a word M. Gérard said, and wished to appear highly entertained.

M. Moutonnet and Mademoiselle Cécile were the most decorous couple of all. They walked quietly along, only pausing occasionally for a pinch of snuff, which was offered and accepted every quarter of an hour. The good lace dealer praised the pleasures of walking in the country and of picnics. He passed in review all those he had given since he was married. Mademoiselle did not appear deeply amused at this conversation; but she let her companion talk on, and watched the other members of the company, trying to imagine what they were saying from the expression of their faces.

Adolphe, who had given his arm to Madame Gérard, tried to keep as near as possible to Eugénie, and to make the conversation general; but the little wife of the perfumer objected to her cavalier's absorption in another person, and she

maliciously endeavored to walk either too fast or too slow, so that she could keep him to herself. Adolphe, however, always found a means of returning to the one he adored; for, though I have not told you that he loved Mademoiselle Moutonnet, I flatter myself that you have divined it.

Eugénie was contented when Adolphe was near her, and broke forth into gayety; but when he disappeared she sighed; she did not dare to turn her head to see if he were coming, but she made various pretexts to lessen their progress, so that the loiterers might catch up with her.

M. Dupont exhausted all his eloquence to amuse his pretty companion, and repeated every instant, "What superb weather it is! — It is very warm. — What a lovely time we are having! — I was afraid it would rain this morning. — I was almost tempted to wear my maroon coat, but I am delighted to think I wore this one, it's so much cooler."

All these proper remarks were lost upon Eugénie, who only responded in monosyllables. The grocer said to himself, "This young person is perfectly well-bred, extremely well-bred."

Bidois dragged himself along with his baskets, going from one to the other with a piteous look when Madame Moutonnet could not see him, and repeating with Dupont, —

"Oh, yes, it is very warm; and when you are obliged to carry baskets like that — ugh, it is kill-

ing. Are they never going to stop? I cannot go any farther."

But all the gentlemen were too much occupied to pay attention to Bidois' complaints, which he only muttered between his teeth, for fear of being overheard by Madame Moutonnet. Sometimes the old clerk seated himself upon a stone bench or a milestone; but as no one noticed him he took up his burdens once more, repeating, in an undertone, "Hum! this is pleasure, indeed! Plague take picnic dinners! I hope they will eat it all up, and not leave anything for me to carry home."

At length they were in the fields. They breathed a fresher air, and though the lilacs were no longer in bloom it was pleasant to walk under their foliage. The paths which they entered were sometimes too narrow for people to walk in them two and two, so the ladies relinquished the arms of their cavaliers, and did not take them again, because each one preferred to run, jump, and do as he pleased.

"Let's have no more etiquette, no more ceremony," cried Bernard, leaving the arm of Madame Moutonnet, with whom he was not sorry to part company. "We must give ourselves up to freedom here, and amuse ourselves before everything."

This new manner of proceeding suited everyone. M. Gérard ran after Mademoiselle Mimi, and, pushing her behind some thick bushes, caught her

and pinched her; and the tall innocent allowed him to do as he pleased, because she supposed this was part of the play. Mademoiselle Cécile had not been greatly amused with the conversation of M. Moutonnet, and she was glad to be left at her ease to spy after what the others were doing, while Madame Bernard tried to make little Estève run by inviting him to catch her.

Those who were best contented did not dare to let it appear, but hastened to imitate the example of the remainder of the company. Adolphe disengaged himself from Madame Gérard, while M. Dupont did his best to retain Eugénie; but she withdrew from him very sweetly, while the grocer was beginning a phrase upon the pleasure he experienced in being her cavalier.

"How modest this young person is!" said Dupont to himself, while Eugénie hastened on. "Is there no way of compelling her to listen to a compliment? No, she does not wish to hear such things. She is so retiring, so reserved!" Then he approached Madame Moutonnet, to whom he said, in a low tone, —

"Your daughter is singularly well brought up."

"Oh, as to that, I flatter myself," responded Madame Moutonnet, with an air of pride. "I am really enchanted that you think so. The more you know her, the more you will wonder at her. Oh, I have her on a very good footing; with a glance, with a word, with a gesture, I make her

obey like a Prussian soldier. Everyone must do so in my house."

"I compliment you upon your success. A woman like that would suit me exactly. Behind a handsome counter, surrounded by loaves of sugar, by bottles of preserves, olives, — a pretty face in the midst of all that would do no harm, Madame Moutonnet."

"That is true, very true, friend Dupont. We will speak of it later."

Madame Moutonnet pressed the grocer's hand and glanced at him with satisfaction. Dupont was ravished, enchanted; for Dupont was very much in love with Eugénie, if we can give the name of love to those desires which a stupid man feels when he looks at a pretty woman just as a gourmand looks at a pie, a drunkard at a bottle, a Norman at an apple.

"Ah," said the grocer, "does your husband understand my intentions, madame? Is he aware that—"

Madame Moutonnet did not allow him time to continue. She glanced at him angrily.

"Who is talking to you about my husband? Why do I need to consult him? Is he meddling with anything? Do I require his advice? Am I not the mistress in my own home?"

"That is right; that is very right," said Dupont, frightened at the volubility with which Madame Moutonnet replied to him, and perceiv-

ing that he had made a foolish remark. "Yes, certainly you are the mistress, and everyone will say as I do, that this concerns you alone."

While Dupont talked with the lace dealer's wife, Eugénie and Adolphe had met. Poor young people! Had they known the subject of the grocer's conversation with Madame Moutonnet, they would not have been so gay, so happy; but they did not suspect what was being planned. Let them enjoy their pleasure. They will be troubled soon enough.

Lovers have their own way of understanding each other, and of saying a great deal in a few words. The most inexperienced hearts, those of novices, comprehend this language very quickly; for in all that which belongs to the soul and to nature one needs no instruction. Eugénie was not coquettish, but she was susceptible, loving; she did not seek to please, but she needed to be loved. This sweet sentiment is made for her who desires a heart which responds to her own. Eugénie did not experience those passing fancies which quickly replace one another. She loved with passion, for she loved truly. You perceive that Eugénie was not an ordinary woman. The surprising point to me is that she was the daughter of Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet; but sic fata volunt.

As yet, we have become very slightly acquainted with Adolphe. Did he deserve to be loved by Eugénie? Yes, it was sufficient that he

should possess a sensitive, generous heart, an ardent soul and lively aspirations; but these qualities would not satisfy Madame Moutonnet. She desired money, and Adolphe had no money, nor even expectations; for his father, the only relative he had in the world, had experienced great misfortunes, and was still far from being prosperous. But love does not make all these reflections; it follows its course, and obstacles, instead of arresting it, redouble its strength. If you wish to conquer love, flatter it, do not oppose it; although, in any case, it is difficult to triumph over it. Adolphe loved Eugénie on first seeing her, and from that time he endeavored to obtain an invitation to Madame Moutonnet's, and after some difficulty succeeded. He did not ask what would best serve his love. Lovers do not put such questions. He loved, he adored Eugénie; he desired only to be loved in return. He was like all the young men who are in love, — always hoping, never reasoning.

The members of the company ran, they jumped, they gave themselves up to gayety. M. Bernard played tricks. M. Gérard drew the ladies into the thickets. The little Estève tried to forget himself. M. Moutonnet took snuff, while Bidois sighed, saying from time to time, "Are we not going to sit down?"

"In a moment," replied Madame Moutonnet, "when we reach the wood."

Dupont wished to play the agreeable and hovered near Eugénie, but she — always warned in time by the tinkling of the two chains with trinkets, which hung over the grocer's trousers — managed to avoid waiting for him. Little Gérard went everywhere and climbed upon the back of Dupont, who rebelled because that made his powder fall. He begged the perfumer to keep his son in order, but M. Gérard was too much occupied with the tall Mimi to reply to M. Dupont. Mademoiselle Cécile saw all that was going on. She had already observed that M. Gérard had kissed Mimi twice, and that Madame Bernard led her little clerk into the most remote spots.

Adolphe would gladly have been alone with Eugénie. Perhaps the young lady would have been glad on her part to talk with Adolphe far from curious eyes; but neither one nor the other dared to leave the company.

Eugénie paused as soon as she perceived that they were leaving their companions, and trembled lest her mother should remark that she was with a handsome young man, and that she preferred him. Madame Moutonnet, far from thinking anything of the sort, had a very exalted idea of her daughter's reserve, and believed her too submissive to dream of experiencing a single sentiment without her mother's permission; but the most severe parents do not see everything.

However, this day, so beautiful for the lovers,

was passing all too quickly, and such occasions would not perhaps occur for a long time again.

"Ah," said Adolphe to himself, "I really must speak to her; I must tell her that I love her, and if I do not tell her today, when shall I say it?"

And, on her part, Eugénie reflected, "I should like to know what he thinks of me. He looks at me, he sighs, — what makes him sigh? Ah, if he does not tell me today I shall not know for a long time."

Poor lovers! You are eager to make your sweet confessions. Fear still restrains you, but if your lips are silent, your eyes have already spoken, and is not their language that of the heart?

Patience! You have reached the wood of Romainville, and I have an idea that you will there learn to understand each other. In the midst of the noise of the games, the disorder of the fête, it is impossible that you should not find an opportunity to be together. Yes, the wood of Romainville is a delightful locality. It is a pity, however, that it is not a little thicker, but we must be content with what we have; besides, I am fully persuaded that the little girls, the grisettes, the village maidens and the fair ladies of Paris, never go there with the intention of searching for deeply shaded groves and solitary pathways.

At last they were in the wood.

"Thank Heavens!" said Bidois, "it was time; I was beginning to feel ill."

"I shall not be sorry to rest," said Papa Moutonnet; "this heat is fatiguing."

"One moment, M. Moutonnet; we must select a good place."

As she said these words Madame Moutonnet placed herself at the head of her company, and walked on to explore. She soon paused at an apparently suitable place.

"It seems to me that spot is pretty," she said.

"Very pretty," replied M. Moutonnet, and the good man spread out his handkerchief to sit upon it.

"Yes, it is very nice here," said Bidois, depositing his baskets, and seating himself upon the grass.

"No, no," said Madame Bernard; "the site is not well chosen; there is not enough of an amphitheatre."

"That is true," replied Gérard; "one sits better where there is a slight declivity."

"Let us look a little farther," said Madame Moutonnet.

"Go on for the amphitheatre," said Papa Moutonnet, rising. "I was very well satisfied here, however. And you, Bidois?"

Bidois did not respond. He rose, grumbling, took the baskets with a gesture of despair and followed the company. They stopped a little farther along.

"There is a pretty amphitheatre," said M. Bernard. "It seems to me that will suit us."

"Yes, truly," said Madame Gérard; "it is much better than the other."

"Come," said M. Moutonnet, "since this spot is suitable, I shall settle myself," and he drew forth his handkerchief, which he spread once more upon the ground, and then seated himself upon it.

During this time Bidois sat down between the two baskets and began to feel at his ease.

"A moment, a moment," said Madame Moutonnet, stopping the ladies who were ready to sit down; "how can you say this place is beautiful? Look! There is filth everywhere, and I really believe that Bidois — ah, mon Dieu! it is a nuisance. Take care what you are doing, Bidois; you are in such a hurry to sit down."

"But, madame, it is — "

"Come on, let us find another place," said M. Moutonnet, picking up his handkerchief with a sigh and following the company; while the old clerk, after he had felt his trousers, where he swore there was nothing, spent a quarter of an hour in rising and adjusting his baskets, which he shook furiously, to avenge himself upon them for the fatigue which they had caused him.

They stopped at another place.

"It seems to me," said M. Gérard, "that this unites everything, — shade, freshness, the picturesque and the agreeable."

"Yes," said Dupont, "it is a picturesqueness

which — it will be very comfortable for dining. What do the ladies think of it?"

"Yes, yes; let us stay here."

"My faith!" said Bidois to himself, dropping to the ground and releasing the baskets; "they may do as they please. I shall not get up again. I am nailed here."

M. Moutonnet looked at his wife before seating himself, and as he saw that she appeared satisfied with the place, he decided for the third time to spread his handkerchief upon the grass. Each selected a situation according to his taste. Madame Bernard, who was fond of sloping ground, seated herself upon a high place, drawing up her knees and leaning upon them gracefully. M. Gérard stationed himself much lower, but opposite the toymaker's wife, upon whom he kept his eyes fastened.

Adolphe hoped to find a spot beside Eugénie, but as he was softly approaching the young girl, who glanced toward him as she sat down, he was forestalled by the stupid grocer, who threw himself upon the sward and almost fell over Eugénie. She dared not move, but was forced to remain near M. Dupont, who, in his attempt to be agreeable to her and amuse her, leaned upon her constantly, and compelled her to support a part of his weight.

"Ah, what a torment!" said Eugénie to herself; "and I thought I should enjoy myself. This

ugly M. Dupont has sworn to stick to me constantly. Ah, I never liked him, but now I feel that I detest him." The poor little thing drew her lips down sorrowfully, while the grocer did his best to entertain her, not perceiving the ill-humor of his neighbor, charmed as he was with the propriety and severity of Eugénie, who did not listen to his compliments.

"It is not more than noon," said M. Moutonnet; "we can do something before dinner."

"Yes," said Bernard; "let us play games, for instance. What do you think of it, Gérard?"

Gérard was constantly looking at his neighbor, and replied, without turning his head, "I will do whatever you wish."

"Before all," said Madame Moutonnet, "we must assure ourselves of the essential, which is the bread and the wine. M. Moutonnet, go to the keeper with Bidois and get what we need. We shall be very glad to refresh ourselves, moreover."

"Yes, certainly," said Dupont; "that would not be bad."

"Let us refresh ourselves," said Bernard.

"Oh, yes," said Madame Bernard; "for the heat is stifling, and still I give myself all the air I can."

"Not yet enough apparently," said Gérard.

During this time Papa Moutonnet, who would have preferred to remain sitting, resting himself,

took his handkerchief and prepared to go in search of the keeper. He approached Bidois, who was seated a little farther off, between the two baskets, and pretended not to hear Madame Moutonnet.

"Are you coming, Bidois?" said the lace dealer.

"What! Where, then?"

"To get bread and wine and glasses."

"Have we not time enough?"

"They want some refreshment."

"I am scarcely seated when you make me trot again. Let me breathe for a moment."

"It is not I; it is my wife who wishes that—"

Bidois could not decide to put himself again in motion, but the voice of Madame Moutonnet made itself heard.

"What, gentlemen!" she said; "have you not yet gone? You should have returned. But go now; we are thirsty."

"We are going, wife. It is Bidois who is not ready."

"Go on, M. Bidois. Dieu, but you are sluggish today. You can hardly move yourself."

Bidois arose, however, and followed M. Moutonnet, grumbling all the way through the wood.

"Let us play, let us run, let us amuse ourselves," said Madame Gérard.

Eugénie, who asked nothing better than to leave her place, arose quickly. Madame Moutonnet and Mademoiselle Cécile, who were not

very agile, remained seated near the baskets; but it was agreed that no one should go far from them.

Still there was a little freedom from the eyes of the parents. Eugénie breathed, and Adolphe hoped; as they ran after one another they often met; and Adolphe, in catching Eugénie, seized her hand, and sometimes slipped his arm around her charming figure. Eugénie did not withdraw her hand immediately when she met that of Adolphe, who pressed it tenderly. These moments were the sweetest of the day for them. Profit by them, young lovers; little things are of great value in love, and happiness is often composed of trifles.

Friend Dupont wished to run after the ladies, and especially after Mademoiselle Moutonnet; but the grocer was not agile. He ran with difficulty, and was soon out of breath.

"You run too fast, mademoiselle," he called to Eugénie. "You will do yourself harm. You will bring on a lung difficulty."

Eugénie did not listen, and only ran faster. She knew well that there was someone who would wait for her.

M. Gérard then proposed that they should play a game of hide-and-seek, and the others asked nothing better.

"I will be 'it,'" said Dupont; "and you will see that I shall soon find you."

All agreed, and the grocer seated himself near Madame Moutonnet, to wait until they called "Ready."

M. Bernard drew away Madame Gérard. The little boy climbed a tree. Madame Bernard had already disappeared with Estève, and M. Gérard again took the arm of Mademoiselle Mimi, with whom he went to hide.

Eugénie and Adolphe remained together, apart from the others. They looked at each other for some moments, and did not stir.

"But," said Adolphe, "he will come back. We must hide."

"Yes, monsieur," said Eugénie, with drooping eyes.

"Come, mademoiselle; I see a charming place over there."

The young man took Eugénie's hand, and she allowed it to remain in his. He drew her away. They ran; they hid themselves in the thickest part of the woods.

"But we are going too far," said Eugénie.

"Do you want M. Dupont to find us immediately?"

"Oh, no; if he did, I should be very sorry."

Then Eugénie blushed at what she had said, and still followed Adolphe in silence. Thickets and branches of trees barred their passage. They stopped at last; then Eugénie looked behind her, but she saw no one. The foliage of the oaks

which surrounded her concealed from her a part of the woods.

"I am afraid we have come a long distance," she said, fixing her eyes upon Adolphe, and abasing them very quickly, because she met those of the young man, which were full of expression. Adolphe did not answer; but he still held her hand, and pressed it even more tenderly, then carried it to his lips and covered it with kisses. Eugénie did not object; she said nothing more; but her heart beat more rapidly. We are so happy when we receive the first caresses of the person we love, especially when modesty, fear and propriety have long delayed this moment.

But this silence could not continue. Eugénie was eager to hear Adolphe, and did not dare to speak first. Adolphe yielded at last to his feelings.

"Ah, mademoiselle," said he, fixing upon Eugénie the sweetest glances, "for a long time I have wanted to be a moment alone with you and avow my love to you. Perhaps you will be angry; but excuse me, pity me rather, it is so difficult to speak to you, — I have only this moment, — and since I saw you first I have loved you, adored you; I think of you every instant; I should like to see you constantly. — O Heaven! what is the matter?"

Eugénie, moved by this sudden declaration, which she nevertheless should have expected,

could scarcely endure the pleasure which she experienced. A coquette would have concealed her feeling; but a heart quite fresh, a heart so loving, could not yet know how to control itself. She felt herself fainting. Joy sometimes hurts more than pain, but is rarely dangerous.

Adolphe supported Eugénie; he threw his arms around her.

"What is the matter?" he said to her.

"Ah, it is nothing. I do not know, for I have never felt like this before."

"You did not listen to me, I fear?"

"Oh, yes."

"And you answer nothing?"

"What can I reply?"

She smiled upon him so tenderly that nothing she could have said would have equalled that charming glance. Adolphe, in the fulness of happiness, swore again to love her and adore her all his life. He pressed her to his heart, and she had not the strength to free herself from his arms. Ah, Madame Moutonnet, if you had not reared your daughter so severely, she would have been better able to defend herself. It is in knowing peril that one braves it. It is when we are surprised that we succumb, and a girl who knows nothing is much more easy to betray than one who has learned to be suspicious.

Adolphe, happy to press Eugénie in his arms, did not yet dare to steal a kiss from her, though

he was dying with longing to gather one from these fresh lips, which were about to respond to his vows. Just then someone said, —

"Ah, there you are! You are taken."

Eugénie recognized the voice of Dupont, and, trembling for fear he had perceived them, she slipped away from Adolphe, and went out of the thicket; but the grocer had not discovered the lovers. Poor Dupont had been searching for a long time without finding anyone, because each couple was exceedingly well concealed; but as he passed a thick clump of bushes an odor of perfume caught his attention, and he realized that Gérard was concealed there. He advanced with the odor for a guide, and in fact soon found monsieur the perfumer seated very near to Mademoiselle Mimi, who was lying upon the grass.

As M. Gérard and the tall young lady were not far from the two lovers, these latter heard Dupont's cries of joy and were soon beside him; for they must now rejoin the company, return to Madame Moutonnet. What a pity! They had so many things to say to each other, and they were so happy alone under the thick foliage! But submission was inevitable; besides, they had now said the most important things, and, should they find an opportunity to speak further, they certainly would not let it escape them.

"You were well hidden," said Dupont; "if it had not been for the odor of vanilla, of jonquil, I

believe I should still be looking for you; but that put me upon your track, M. Gérard."

"Ah, where is Madame Bernard?" said the toymaker. "Have you found her?"

"No; I have been looking everywhere."

"I wager she has made Estève run to the edge of the wood. It amuses her to enrage him. My wife is like me; she likes to play jokes."

As he said this M. Bernard caught the branch of a tree, on which he wished to swing like the little Gérard; but as he weighed three times as much as the small boy, the branch broke, and M. Bernard rolled on the grass. They hastened to him, fearing that he was injured; but Bernard arose, assuring them that he had done it on purpose, and forcing himself to laugh, though his nose was skinned and he had a great lump on his forehead.

"But it seems to me that your face is hurt," said Madame Moutonnet, seeing M. Bernard return.

"It is nothing, ladies; it is nothing. It was a little fun, a joke. In the country, people amuse themselves, and I am one of them."

Madame Bernard reappeared at last with her clerk. The toymaker's wife was a trifle more flushed than usual, and Estève's eyes were starting from his head.

"Where the devil were you?" said Dupont. "I have looked for you everywhere."

"We were not far away."

"Has Estève had a sunstroke?" asked M. Bernard. "The poor boy is very red."

"No, no; it is because he leaned over too far to get me some strawberries."

"Strawberries! strawberries! I have already told you, my dear, that in this wood one finds only acorns."

"It is true; you are right; I have found nothing but superb acorns."

"Madame Bernard, your husband has a lump on his forehead."

"Oh, that does not disturb me; his forehead was made for that."

"The refreshments have not come yet," said Dupont, who was dripping with perspiration from the game of hide-and-seek.

"Ah, my husband and Bidois are so slow! They are enough to kill me."

"Hurrah! hurrah! There they are."

In fact M. Moutonnet made his appearance, burdened with bread and glasses; while Bidois carried a basket furnished with full bottles of wine and water.

"There now, gentlemen! there now!" said Madame Moutonnet. "What are you thinking of? To be two hours in bringing us that!"

"But, wife, today is Sunday."

"Well, monsieur, do not people drink on Sunday as well as on other days?"

"On the contrary, my sweet, they drink more; that is what is the matter."

"To the health of Eustache!" said M. Bernard, seizing a bottle.

Everyone responded to the toymaker's toast, and the good Moutonnet spread his handkerchief once more upon the grass, and seated himself, delighted to be able to rest at last, which happened to him seldom on the day of his fête.

They no longer played hide-and-seek, because it was too warm, and these gentlemen did not wish to fatigue themselves. Eugénie and Adolphe, however, regretted this pretty game, which had furnished them the opportunity of being alone for a moment, and which promised them so much that was sweet; and there were, perhaps, some other members of the company who would gladly have sought concealment, but they did not dare to express this wish.

"We will play again after dinner," said M. Bernard; "it will not be so warm, and we shall have more shade."

The time passed very quickly. Four o'clock arrived; they must dine. This was for many persons, and especially for the hero of the fête, the most interesting moment of the day. The baskets were emptied, the provisions were laid out. They seated themselves almost in a circle, and on this occasion Adolphe found a means of placing himself beside Eugénie; the stout grocer

was at the left of the young girl, but the handsome youth was at her right, which was at least a compensation.

They found everything good, everything excellent; appetite seasoned the food; the keeper's wine was praised. Up to that moment everything had passed off well. Everybody was gay and joyous, pleasure presided over the feast; but Bidois, who had assisted at all the celebrations of the Moutonnet family, said to himself,—

"It is to be hoped that it will end pleasantly today, and that there will be no unfortunate events, no quarrels, as is the ordinary custom on the festivals of Saint Eustache and Sainte Barbe; they usually begin by laughing and singing, and return scolding and disputing."

While waiting events, the old clerk ate and drank for four, delighted to see the eatables disappear, because he hoped to carry back empty baskets.

We have seen how M. Moutonnet had undertaken to carve the superb turkey, which feat he could not accomplish, in spite of the assistance of Madame Bernard. We saw afterward the ill-humor of Madame Moutonnet, who did not like to have anyone but herself offer assistance to her husband.

We have seen, also, that there was dancing before the keeper's lodge, while people dined in the wood. Though it was then only five o'clock,

the ball had already begun, because in the country they commence in good season, and no one is afraid to dance in the sunshine. Since we find things as we left them, let us see now how the fête of M. Moutonnet will terminate, and if the presentiments of Bidois were well founded.

CHAPTER IV

The End of M. Moutonnet's Fête

"Why, how is this, can nobody succeed in cutting up that turkey?" asked Bernard.

"It will be extremely unfortunate if they can't," said Bidois, under his breath, "for in that case we shall have to carry it back to Paris, and we shall have nothing else to eat during the rest of the week."

"I should like, however, to taste the parson's nose," said Madame Bernard, who had passed the thigh of the turkey to Estêve, the little clerk, whom she stuffed like a cannon.

"Yes," cried the toymaker, "my wife is terribly fond of the parson's nose; she would take a whipping any time if by that means she could get it."

"I'll guarantee to give it to her," said the perfumer, boastfully. "Pass me this terrible fowl, and you shall see me cut it up in short order."

"Oh, yes; my husband does everything so gracefully," said Madame Gérard.

"The turkey will smell of pomatum," remarked Bidois, under his breath.

M. Gérard took the fowl and with much difficulty managed to dismember it, although Madame Moutonnet repeated every moment,—

"I'm sure it must be tender; I bought it myself."

"Nevertheless," said the perfumer, "I assure you it is pretty tough."

No one dared to say that the turkey was not eatable, but it was not asked for the second time. The company attacked the pasty and the other provisions, and Bidois saw with regret that the heaviest piece was likely to be left for him to carry home.

The muscat of friend Dupont restored the good humor which had been somewhat lessened by the episode of the turkey; and the bottle, being soon emptied, was replaced by the anisette, a liqueur which had the effect of increasing the liveliness of the gentlemen and the abandon of the ladies. The sound of the tambourine and the clarinet, which reached the ears of the company, added to the charms of the repast.

"We have music," said M. Dupont; "it is worse than at Paris."

"I hope we shall dance this evening," said Madame Bernard; "that will help my digestion."

"You shall dance, ladies; you shall dance. We will make you jump."

"Ah, yes; we shall be proud of you gentlemen, if we can count upon you."

"What do you say, Madame Bernard? Am I not equal to a pirouette? Can I not pass a figure of six when I take the trouble?"

"You pass a six,—you? Oh, the idea, M. Bernard! I have never seen it."

"You will see it this evening, madame."

"I shall be curious to see that."

"Really," said Madame Moutonnet, leaning toward Mademoiselle Cécile, "this Madame Bernard has always very singular conversations."

"Don't speak to me about her," replied Mademoiselle Cécile. "She has very bad taste. She irritates my nerves."

"There!" said Bidois softly; "the women are already whispering; there will soon be a row."

"Are we not going to have any singing?" said M. Dupont.

"Surely, parbleu, we shall sing."

"It is proper for you to begin, my daughter," said Madame Moutonnet to Eugénie, who, with Adolphe beside her, had entirely forgotten her verses. "Do you hear me, my daughter?"

"Yes, mamma," replied Eugénie.

They were all silent, and Eugénie sang the stanzas in honor of her father's fête. She trembled at first, but afterwards she collected herself, and put some expression into what she sang because her heart was in accord with the words. The good Moutonnet kissed his daughter. It was the moment for tenderness.

"Really," said Dupont, "Mademoiselle has a dazzling voice."

Adolphe said nothing, but he looked at Eugénie, and his look meant more to the sweet girl than Dupont's compliment.

"Now," said Bernard, who did not care much for sentiment, "we must sing something gay, something jolly."

"Ah, yes," said his wife; "let's have some little drolleries. I love such things."

"Madame, do not forget that we have young ladies with us," remarked Madame Moutonnet, assuming a tone of severity.

"I believe I know that as well as yourself, madame," responded Madame Bernard, in a somewhat ruffled voice. "Have I not a child?"

"Yes, no doubt; a child who is more than fifteen years old. On that account, madame, we should be careful as to what is sung."

"Madame, my daughter suspects no evil. So much the worse for those who see it in everything."

"If one wishes to see it, the occasions will not be lacking with certain persons."

"Come, come, ladies; is it right to get angry about a song?" said the grocer, offering his bag of nuts and raisins. "Take a fig, Madame Bernard. Take some, Madame Moutonnet; here are some raisins without seeds."

"Friend Dupont is right," said M. Bernard;

"besides, I can select a song suitable to the occasion."

"Let us have a drinking-song," said Papa Moutonnet.

"We must finish the bottle of anisette."

"The drinking-song, by all means," said M. Bernard, and the toymaker sounded a Bacchic refrain. The gentlemen joined in the chorus, and the anisette drew to its close, but the guests sang in ear-splitting fashion. The liquor had excited them.

"Ah, mon Dieu! what a noise!" exclaimed Madame Bernard, stopping her ears. "Your drinking-songs do not amuse me at all. I like 'One Day Guillot found Lisette,' or 'Father Barnaba's Crutch,' much better."

"Fie, now, madame!" cried Madame Moutonnet. "'Father Barnaba's Crutch'! And why not the 'Potpourri de la Vestale,' while you are about it?"

"Madame, they sing it everywhere at dessert."

"Yes, possibly among men; but with mothers of a family —"

"Really, this is becoming ridiculous. Do we not go to the country to laugh?"

"Because madame wants to laugh, must my daughter listen to things that I blush to hear."

"Really, you would blush for a very little thing; and people who are so rigid in words are not always the strictest in actions."

"What does that mean, Madame Bernard?"

Madame Moutonnet had half risen as she pronounced these words; her glances seemed to speak defiance to the toymaker's wife; and this lady, delighted to see that she had aroused her, was content to smile maliciously, as she looked at M. Gérard; while Bidois, who saw that things were getting warm, laughed to himself, and profited by the situation to throw into the woods the second joint of the turkey, which should have been returned to the basket.

M. Bernard, imbued with a spirit of conciliation, was always the one to pacify a quarrel. Besides, on this occasion the other men were not in condition to take action: Adolphe had not heard it; Dupont did not know what he ought to say; Gérard did not care to interfere; and M. Moutonnet, already stupefied by the anisette, quite lost his head when he saw that his wife was angry. So it was Bernard who interrupted the dispute, inviting the young girls and the young men to go and dance while their papas were singing.

This advice was generally approved. Madame Moutonnet herself encouraged her daughter to go and dance.

"That will be much more proper," she said, "than listening to the songs of these gentlemen."

"Go, children," said Madame Bernard; "we will soon join you. I intend to dance also."

Eugénie, enchanted with the permission, rose, as did the tall Mimi; Adolphe, Estève, and the little Gérard followed the young ladies; and Mademoiselle Cécile, who probably counted herself as one of the children, went to join the young people who were preparing to dance.

Dupont hesitated; he did not know whether to follow Eugénie or remain with Madame Moutonnet. While he was considering the question the young people disappeared, and as he was not a very fine dancer he let them go, reserving himself for the last square dances.

Adolphe was a little more bold, and he took Eugénie's arm; Estève offered his to Mademoiselle Mimi; the little Gérard ran ahead, and Mademoiselle Cécile was compelled to walk alone, and as she went on she said very unkind things of the young people, whom she declared to be so extremely ill-bred. As if a sweet sympathy should not draw youth toward youth, and a loving heart toward beauty! Such preferences are quite natural; but one never does them justice. When we are forty years old we wish to appear twenty; we wish to please with a morose countenance, we hope to attract others with disagreeable manners, to be listened to when we bore our friends; and, instead of anticipating a just return for ourselves, and exacting nothing, we find it more convenient to criticise the century, its men and its manners, and so we take vengeance for the ravages of time.

But let us leave Mademoiselle Cécile to her grumbling and follow Adolphe and Eugénie. On their way to the dance they found it possible from time to time to pause behind a thick bush which concealed them from the curious eyes of the spinster. Then Adolphe seized Eugénie in his arms, pressed her warmly against his heart, while he took a kiss, then a second, then still another upon her neck, her cheeks, even her mouth, and Eugénie made such a poor defence. What would you have? The anisette had produced its effect upon young heads; Adolphe was more venturesome, Eugénie more tender, and if they had not been so closely followed — I believe really that it was very fortunate that it was Sunday, and that there were so many people in the wood.

But as they went on, as they touched each other's hands, as they kissed, they exchanged some eager phrases, those half-words which ended by carrying intoxication to the heart of Adolphe, and a disturbance, an inexpressible charm, to that of Eugénie.

"I shall always love you," said Adolphe. "I shall live henceforth only to adore you."

"And I — ah, I promise you also —" She did not dare finish, but her eyes completed what she had begun, and a sweet pressure of the hand confirmed this innocent avowal.

"Ah, how happy I am today!"

"I have never had so much pleasure," responded Eugénie. "Why must the day end? How short it has seemed to me!"

"And for me, especially since I have known — since I told you what I feel. When shall I see you after this?"

"Alas! I do not know. Perhaps in a week."

"Oh, I want to see you every day, dear Eugénie. Could I exist without that?"

"Ah, I wish it also; but what can I do? You know that I am always at the counter."

"Yes; but I shall often pass before your shop, and when your mamma is not there you can stand a moment upon the doorstep."

"Ah, I will try to do so."

"And then I can say a word to you."

"Ah, that will be very rare, very difficult."

And our two lovers sighed. But the sound of the music recalled them to their real situation, and they quickly forgot the anxiety of the future to enjoy the pleasure of the present. The dance was animated; the ball of Romainville was in all its splendor. Adolphe and Eugénie mingled with the villagers; they danced without pretension, and without noticing the movements of their neighbors. In the midst of the ball they were alone; they did not see the crowd about them; they were conscious of but one sentiment, a single thought occupied them, — they loved each other and they were together.

Young Estève danced with tall Mimi, who was only willing to take a place in a quadrille made up of middle-class people, as she did not wish to mingle with the peasants, because in the eyes of the young girl a tailor's apprentice was in a much higher position than a laborer. It is certain that a laborer has about him neither the odor of scented soap nor of cheap honey-water. Mademoiselle Cécile seated herself upon one of the benches which surrounded the dancing-ground. She constituted herself the gallery, and would probably do nothing else. The little Gérard might have danced with her; but the rogue preferred to run and jump in the woods. In the moments of repose, Adolphe would have liked to lead Eugénie to the woods; but suppose Madame Moutonnet should return and not find her daughter dancing! Oh, it would not be possible to leave the scene. Adolphe felt this and sighed; but he did not wish to expose Eugénie to her mother's reproaches; it would be better to avoid the birth of the slightest suspicion in mamma's mind, for she would immediately separate the young people.

They must content themselves, therefore, with dancing together, saying a thousand pretty things, making tender vows, expressing the love they felt by glances, by sighs. That was indeed a great deal. Adolphe considered that it was not enough; but lovers are never content. Love is ambitious, — the more it obtains, the more it desires; but

ambition is never satisfied, and love is too soon satiated.

There was a fourth square dance, and for our lovers it was the same as the first; but Mademoiselle Mimi was already fatigued; and, deciding perhaps that little Estève was not so interesting as M. Gérard, she sat down to rest beside Mademoiselle Cécile.

Suddenly an indistinct buzzing, a confused mingling of cries, of laughter and of song, indicated the arrival of the entire company. M. Bernard headed the procession with Madame Gérard, making more noise himself alone than the whole village orchestra. He penetrated into the centre of the dancing-ground and walked about with his lady, in spite of the remonstrances of the dancers whom he disturbed, cutting through the English chains and the figures, and without listening to Madame Gérard, who called to him to stop him; but Bernard was a little excited; he had put on his hat crosswise; nothing would stop him; he seemed to wish to defy the whole assemblage.

M. Gérard gave his arm to Madame Bernard, who no longer walked, but skipped as soon as she approached the dancers, endeavoring to recall the forgotten steps of her youth; nor could Gérard lend her much assistance, because during the twenty years in which he had been dancing he had used none but the zephyr step in all the figures.

Dupont conducted Madame Moutonnet, listening patiently to her complaints upon the subject of the toymaker's wife, whom she declared she would no longer invite to her companies, as she had found her conduct and conversation much more improper than usual. The songs which the gentlemen had sung after the departure of the young ladies had increased the ill-humor of Madame Moutonnet, and it was not without difficulty that a new dispute was avoided between the two friends. To all that the lace dealer's wife said, the grocer replied, —

"That is very true. You are perfectly right. I am of your opinion."

M. Moutonnet followed the company at a distance; the poor man felt stupid, and was no longer quite secure in his gait. He was careful to walk behind his wife, singing rather a gay little song, and rolling his eyes wildly as he gazed at the little peasant girls who passed near him.

Bidois closed the procession. He carried the two baskets containing the remnants of the dinner; and, thanks to all his little tricks, a great part of the turkey remained in the wood of Romainville. The baskets were, therefore, comparatively light; Bidois found them still too heavy. He was especially angry, because he was obliged to take back to Paris the two empty bottles which had contained the muscat wine and anisette, friend Dupont's present.

Madame Moutonnet's first care was to find her daughter.

"I hope," she said to Dupont, "that you will now invite her to dance. Young girls love dancing. It is an innocent pleasure which they should be permitted to enjoy, especially when they can only have it three or four times a year."

"You are right; I am of your opinion; besides, I dance myself with considerable taste. I had lessons from a dancing-master for two years, at twenty-four sous a lesson."

"Diable! You ought to be light on your feet then."

Adolphe conducted Eugénie to her mother; the poor lovers sighed when they saw her appear. There could be no more sweet whisperings.

Dupont hastened to invite Eugénie for the first square dance. The poor little thing glanced at her mother and saw that she must accept, but she managed to convey to Adolphe by a secret look her distress at dancing with anyone but himself. He understood, and his answering glance told her they must submit. He then invited Madame Moutonnet to dance, but that lady declined the courtesy with thanks. She had not danced for a long time, considering that it compromised her dignity. Adolphe did not insist, as we can imagine, but hurried to take possession of a stout peasant girl, and placed himself opposite Eugénie. In this manner, he still danced with his sweetheart.

"I hope we shall step it," said M. Bernard, who, since he had been drinking anisette, wished to jump higher than anyone else. "You will see, Madame Gérard, I can swing six without moving from my place."

The toymaker's wife was not less excited than her husband, and Gérard was her cavalier.

"Ah," said M. Moutonnet, softly, "if my wife were not present, I would also have a square dance; but I must keep her company."

"Go on," said Bidois, pushing; "she is over there with Mademoiselle Cécile. She will not see you."

"Do you believe it, Bidois? There is a little brunette whom I would like to invite. She is very pretty — is she not?"

"Bah! She has a skin as black as a prune."

"That is all right. In a brunette it does not show."

"Go and ask her."

"Oh, no; if my wife should see me dancing with a young girl — It is a pity; I feel exactly in the humor this evening."

"They are all tipsy," murmured Bidois to himself, as he sat down with his baskets beside Mademoiselle Cécile. "They are drunk like fish. Their eyes are starting from their heads. The idea of old Moutonnet wanting to dance! I am sorry he did not invite that little peasant girl. We should have had a lovely scene; his wife

would have torn out his eyes. Hum! The cursed bottles. They will be fortunate if they get to Paris without being cracked."

As the old clerk said these words he shook the baskets in such a way as to make the bottles dance; then, observing that Madame Moutonnet was only a few steps from him and that she could see him, he put on a satisfied air, and, bending his head toward the lace dealer's wife, he asked her humbly if she would not take his arm to walk about the dancing-grounds.

"Where is M. Moutonnet? What have you done with him, Bidois?"

"Madame, he is walking about over there. No doubt he is watching his daughter dance."

"Let us join him. Put the baskets down by Mademoiselle Cécile and give me your arm."

"With much pleasure, madame."

Bidois freed himself of his baskets, praying Heaven that someone would carry them off; then with an air of pride he came to offer his arm to madame, who did him the honor of accepting it; and, to render himself worthy of this distinguished favor, Bidois adjusted his face to that of his mistress with as much care as a conscript who walks beside his corporal.

The orchestra gave the signal. The dancers were in movement. Bernard started before any of the others, and in taking his first steps gave a kick to a handsome young man of the neighbor-

hood, to whom the movements and gambols of the toymaker were not at all agreeable, and who glanced at him with much ill-feeling when he perceived that the gentleman had soiled his nankeen trousers; but Bernard kept on his way and paid no attention to the peasant's objections. He wished to electrify his partner, while on her part Madame Bernard danced enthusiastically with M. Gérard.

A little farther along Dupont danced with Eugénie. The grocer wanted to please the young lady, and did all that he could to recall the lessons he had received from his teacher at twenty-four sous an hour. He jumped, he skipped, he trembled like one possessed; the two watch-chains that swung over his trousers, and the hundred-sous pieces which filled his vest pockets, made a noise when he danced like the accompaniment of a tambourine.

Eugénie endeavored to avoid laughing; but it was not always possible to restrain a smile, especially when her eyes met those of Adolphe, who was also admiring the grocer's dance. Dupont was charmed with the young lady's gayety, and, convinced that he had made a conquest, he danced with fresh ardor in spite of the drops of perspiration which trickled down his face and, mingling with the powder that fell from his hair, formed little snowy rivulets which agreeably diversified the purple of his countenance.

Madame Moutonnet and Bidois easily perceived the sky-blue coat outlined in the air, and approached the quadrille.

"How well he dances!" said Madame Moutonnet, considering Dupont. "What grace! what lightness!"

"It is true," said Bidois; "he does not appear to be thinking of it; and if he did not perspire so much —"

"He perspires! he perspires! and does not everyone perspire in dancing? Does not M. Moutonnet perspire when he dances the minuet? and you yourself, Bidois, this morning, looked like a dog just out of the water."

"It is true, madame; everyone perspires. I meant the contrary; it is not the dance which makes him perspire; — but it is a pity the day is so warm, for it is a terribly hot day."

"Explain yourself then. You turn your tongue for two hours before you are able to arrange your phrases. Ah, what pirouettes! Did you see?"

"Yes, madame; it is like the opera."

"Have you been to the opera, Bidois?"

"Yes, madame; I went there once about thirty years ago, but I have retained the most precious remembrance of it. I saw 'Psyche' and 'l'Avocat Patelin.' They are famous operas."

"It is a pity that his trinkets make such a noise."

"Ah, madame, there is nothing disagreeable

about that noise. It always indicates a man in easy circumstances."

"Yes, to be sure; you are right; at any rate, it indicates watches."

"Ah, madame, your daughter is a very pretty dancer."

"She dances very decently, Bidois; in a word, she has been taught how to dance."

"She resembles her mother, and will be a very pretty woman. She is as like you as two and two make four."

Madame Moutonnet did not respond to this compliment. She was content to smile as she looked at her daughter, and at this moment she was proud of her beauty. Never, indeed, had Eugénie been prettier. Her features were animated by the dance; and the presence of Adolphe, what he had said to her, the new sentiment she had experienced,—all gave her countenance a charming expression, which Dupont interpreted in his favor, while mamma attributed it only to the pleasure of the dance. A single person knew the young girl's secret, and divined why a charming emotion was depicted upon her face.

The square dance drew to its close, and Madame Moutonnet, fully occupied with her daughter, had forgotten her husband for a moment, when a great noise was heard. There were cries, disputes, threats. Everyone hastened to the place where the quarrel was going on. Bidois turned aside so

as not to be caught in the crowd; but Madame Moutonnet feared nothing, and wished to know what was the matter, because she recognized the voice of M. Bernard. She therefore compelled the old clerk to advance, which he did regretfully. Soon the country people, who pressed close behind them, bore them toward the locality whence the cries issued. A tall man in a vest held M. Bernard by the hair; and this gentleman, on his part, had seized his adversary by the throat. The countryman, weary of being kicked each instant on the legs or on the feet, as a result of the toy-maker's gambols, had ended by pushing him so rudely that Bernard had fallen in the middle of the quadrille. When he arose he called the villager a clown. At this word the insulted person sprang upon M. Bernard, and the combatants were fully engaged when the cries of Madame Bernard and Madame Gérard had interrupted the square dance.

"Ah, mon Dieu!" exclaimed Madame Moutonnet; "M. Bernard is quarrelling. I was very sure that it would end badly."

"He has been drinking too much anisette," murmured Bidois.

"It's these peasants, clodhoppers, boors!" cried Madame Bernard. "They wanted to keep my husband from dancing, as if the place were not free."

These words, far from calming the quarrel, irri-

tated the villagers, who naturally took the part of their comrade.

"That great imbecile, who kicked everybody! Doesn't he look stupid?" said the peasant women; "and this woman, who calls us boors. See, now; she doesn't seem to be very much."

"Hold, Fanchon! I wager they are lackeys from Paris, who come here to give themselves airs, by imitating their masters."

"And that other squint-eyed fellow, who smells so good that you cannot stand beside him."

"He wants to play the Grand Turk."

"And they want to make laws here."

"We'll have to make them dance without music."

During this dialogue, which terrified Bidois, M. Bernard continued to struggle with his adversary, who, stronger than he, would have thrown him to the ground if the guard had not fortunately arrived to separate them. M. Gérard had been pulling his wife's arm for a long time; he wished to get out of the crowd, and leave the ball immediately. The keeper advised M. Bernard to do the same; but our toymaker was a hero when he had dined well. He went back to the countryman, whom he called a common fellow. The peasant turned to give him a blow with his fist; but at this moment poor Bidois, who had been drawn into the midst of the tumult in spite of himself, advanced, at Madame Moutonnet's com-

mand, to pull M. Bernard by the coat, and received upon his nose the blow intended for the toymaker.

"I am dead!" cried Bidois, and in his anguish he dropped the arm of Madame Moutonnet. The villagers laughed their loudest, and Madame Bernard expressed vigorously a desire that her husband should beat the rascals who dared laugh at her. But, as a result of his bad temper, Bernard had all the peasants on his back, who pushed him out of the limits of the dancing-ground in such fashion as to deprive him of all desire to return.

Madame Moutonnet ran after her husband. She found him at last seated in a sheltered place far from the dispute, beside a pretty brunette, to whom he was offering macaroons.

"What are you doing there, monsieur?" said his wife to him, seizing his arm. "What! while our friends are fighting, while they are disputing, you —"

"Wife, I have been shooting, and I won every time. I was about to bring you some macaroons, sweetheart."

"It is a fine time to talk of macaroons! Do you hear the noise? Go and get my daughter, and let us hurry and leave the woods. Madame Bernard, with her foolishness, has set all the peasants against us."

"Ah, mon Dieu!"

"Come, come, monsieur. You will explain your conduct later."

M. Moutonnet did not wait for this order to be repeated. He followed his wife, who returned to the dance, in the hope of finding her daughter; but she met only Dupont, who did not know what had become of his partner.

"Where is my daughter, Monsieur Dupont? What have you done with her?"

"I am looking for her, as you see. We were separated in the crowd."

"Ah, mon Dieu! Is she lost?"

"No; I believe that M. Adolphe is with her. They cannot be far away."

The lovers had profited by the quarrel — for lovers profit by everything — to rejoin each other and converse a little, and to have some moments more together. They felt obliged to repeat, before they separated, that they loved each other; that they would always adore each other; that one person alone henceforth would occupy all their thoughts; that they would have one aim, one hope, — that of living forever for each other. They had already said it a hundred times, but in love we like to hear repeated what we already know. We like to hear again what we can never hear enough. It is a very pleasant thing to love and to be loved.

But, as in the order of nature everything must have an end; and, since it is not our privilege —

poor mortals! — to taste eternally the pleasures reserved for the blessed; in fact, as we are not very happy on earth, in order, no doubt, that we may be more so in heaven, — our pleasures are very short here; and that is why the sweet conversation of Eugénie and Adolphe lasted not more than ten minutes, in spite of all the charm the two lovers found in it.

The voice of Madame Moutonnet, who called her daughter, interrupted their happiness; they fled quickly in another direction, and then returned to the dancing-ground, where disorder was still reigning, and where they appeared to be looking for Eugénie's parents. Eugénie described the fright that she had felt, and Madame Moutonnet thanked Adolphe for having watched over her daughter. Bidois arrived, holding his handkerchief to his crushed nose. They looked for the baskets, but they found only one, and it was that which did not contain the bottles.

"The peasants must have stolen the other," said Bidois, "supposing that the bottles were full."

"It is very probable," said M. Moutonnet.

"It is very unfortunate," said his wife. "Two Sèvres bottles. I regret them."

"It is true," said the old clerk, "that they were superb," and he turned away to conceal a malicious smile which would have betrayed him.

"Come, come; let us go; let us leave this

accursed wood. We have had enough of Romainville for some time."

"Where are the others, wife?"

"My faith! I care nothing about them. Those Bernards! Ah, I see myself playing a game with them again, or inviting them to a fête! M. Dupont, give my daughter your arm. Come on, M. Moutonnet; hasten your steps a little. Don't you see how ill-naturedly the peasants look at us?"

"Yes, really," said Bidois, "their intentions are bad."

At last the Moutonnet family gained the highway, where they soon met the remainder of the company. M. Gérard had much difficulty in calming Madame Bernard, who, furious at leaving the ball after a square dance, expressed herself in the most bitter invectives against the inhabitants of Romainville. Her husband joined the chorus; and the perfumer's family, fearing a fresh difficulty with the country people, were on the point of leaving the toymaker and his wife, when the hero of the fête rejoined them with his wife and the rest of the party.

"Well, M. Moutonnet," said M. Bernard, as soon as he perceived him, "I hope that was a famous scene."

"Yes," said the toymaker's wife; "it was fine, —your ball at Romainville. I shall remember it for a long time."

"It must be confessed also, madame," replied

the lace dealer's wife, "that your husband was not reasonable, and that you yourself, instead of placating these villagers, did nothing but irritate them still further by making insulting remarks."

"Insulting remarks, madame! Insulting remarks!"

"Yes, madame; I call the company to witness."

"Ah, that is a little too much, Madame Moutonnet. I advise you to take the part of people who have abused us and chased us from the dancing-ground, who threw M. Bernard to the ground and beat your clerk. Look at his nose. See what a state he is in."

"The blow was not intended for him. Why did he come forward just at that moment?"

"I know very well, madame, you would have liked it better if my husband had received it."

"At least," said Bidois in a low tone, "he would have got what he deserved."

"Yes," said Bernard, "they were rascals, and if I had had a detachment of police at my command I would have let them see with what kind of wood I warm myself."

"All that does not prevent me from saying, M. Bernard, that it was you who commenced it."

"I commenced it, madame? I danced; that is all."

"Yes; but you danced in such a way that—"

"And there is another. Would he restrain his steps for these boors? When you danced too,

madame, you required a good deal of room. I remember that, although it may have been a long time ago."

"Madame, no personalities, I beg of you."

"It is you who are insulting me, madame."

"I shall have to borrow your tongue for that."

"Oh, yours is quite sufficient to make miserable your husband, your daughter, and all those who surround you."

"Oh, that is too much! M. Moutonnet, they are insulting your wife."

M. Moutonnet looked at his wife to know if he were expected to respond, and pulled his hat down on his head to give himself greater firmness. Meanwhile the Gérard family, who saw that a fresh dispute was arising, quickened their pace so as not to be obliged to take sides.

"Yes, yes, madame," exclaimed Madame Bernard, who gave free course to her anger. "You wish to play the mistress everywhere, Madame Moutonnet. You believe that everyone should tremble before you. You pretend to govern everyone else as well as your husband; but that will not do, madame. I am very glad to tell this to you in passing. Besides, it has been choking me for a long time. Keep your fêtes and your dinners. I will keep mine also, which are just as good, I flatter myself; and if I wish to serve liqueur with dessert, I shall not wait for my grocer to make me a present."

"What an envenomed tongue! But we must pardon madame in this. We know that after dinner she is not quite mistress of herself."

"How horrible! They are saying your wife is drunk, M. Bernard. Do you hear this wicked woman?"

"They say that?" responded Bernard. "Ah, parbleu, if Madame Moutonnet were a man, I know very well — Come, Madame Bernard; let us go, for there will be trouble."

"Yes, my dear; you are right. Let us leave these people. Come, Estève. Hurry, daughter."

The Bernard family turned off on another road, leaving Madame Moutonnet, who was choking with rage, so that she was almost ill, upon the highway.

"It is lucky they went," said M. Moutonnet; "I was beginning to lose patience."

"This Madame Bernard is a true dragon," said Bidois; "her eyes were starting from her head."

"Yes," said friend Dupont, in his turn, who had not uttered a word while the quarrel lasted. "She is a woman whom it would not be easy to lead."

"That is a good lesson," said Madame Moutonnet. "That will teach us to choose our friends better. M. Moutonnet, I do not need to forbid you ever to cross the threshold of the Bernards."

"What, now, wife? I was just going to propose myself that we should see them no more."

Adolphe and Eugénie were the only ones who said nothing. The dispute had interested them very little; and I believe, moreover, that they secretly blessed an event that detained them in the wood of Romainville, which they found so charming and left with so much regret.

But they must go back to Paris. Night had fallen, and a storm was threatening; some drops of rain had already alarmed the city people, who were hastening to regain the capital. Madame Moutonnet drew on her spouse, who endeavored to make his steps as long as those of his wife. Dupont, who was always in a perspiration, did not wish to be left behind. He made his trinkets jingle, pulling along his pretty companion, who was anxious to give her arm to Adolphe, and tried to think of some way by which she could do so. Bidois trotted last of all, so delighted that he had found a means to rid himself of a basket and the bottles that he almost forgot the blow which he had received.

But the storm burst, the rain fell in torrents, the wind blew violently in the faces of the travellers. They had left the wood, but they were not yet in Belleville, and there was no shelter; they must, therefore, submit to a thorough drenching. M. Moutonnet, who had tied his handkerchief over his hat, was urged to run by his wife; while Bidois, anxious to preserve his headgear, which had only seen two years' service, stuffed the

remnants of the dinner into his pockets, and after he had undone the handle of the basket put it over his hat, which made him look like Robinson Crusoe.

Dupont wished Eugénie to run, but she tripped, halted and limped; she could scarcely walk, so Adolphe ran to offer her his arm, in order that she might have support on either side. Eugénie accepted, — it was indeed upon Adolphe's arm that she preferred to lean, — congratulating herself upon her little trick. How quickly love arouses the imagination of young ladies!

They arrived at Belleville, but it was still a great distance from thence to the Rue Saint Martin, and the storm showed no signs of cessation.

"We must try to find a hack," said M. Moutonnet; "for, despite my good will, I am not able to run to Paris. Is it not so, my dear?"

"You have so little endurance! Yes, of course we must have a hack; but where can we get one?"

"I will run in all directions," said Adolphe, "while you wait for me in this café."

"You are really too good, monsieur."

Adolphe started on his exploration, and the company entered the Café Vert merely to seek a shelter, because Madame Moutonnet declared that it would be folly to order any refreshment, and Dupont did not insist upon it. The time rolled on, the rain beat furiously against the window panes, and Adolphe did not return.

"Poor young man!" soliloquized Eugénie. "He will receive the brunt of the storm, but I am sure he is not thinking of the rain;—with him I would brave any weather. Ah, I should like to be still in the wood of Romainville."

But when one is not in love one does not enjoy accidents. Anxious to reach home, Madame Moutonnet, finding that Adolphe did not return, ordered Bidois to go in search of him.

"Look at the Ile d'Amour," she said to him; "there must be hacks there; and make haste, for we cannot sleep here."

Bidois, forced to leave the café, replaced the basket upon his head and turned in the direction of Ile d'Amour, consigning to his satanic majesty the feast of Saint Eustache and picnics in general. He was scarcely gone when Adolphe returned with a hack.

"Ah, quick, ladies," he said as he entered. "I have had much difficulty in persuading this coachman to come after us. Do not let us lose any time, or he will go."

"Yes, yes," said Madame Moutonnet; "get in quickly. Ah, monsieur, how grateful we are to you!"

"And poor Bidois," suggested M. Moutonnet, entering the hack.

"Ah, my faith, it is his fault; he ought to have found monsieur; but, anyway, call him."

"Bidois! Bidois!" cried M. Moutonnet, put-

ting his head out of the door; but he received no response, and the coachman swore impatiently.

"Come, come; let us go," said Madame Moutonnet. "Bidois will have to return on foot; it will teach him to do his errands properly."

The coachman whipped his horses, and, as the road was slightly downhill, the vehicle rolled rapidly to the boulevard, and soon stopped in Rue Saint Martin before the lace dealer's shop. The Moutonnet family entered their home, thanking Adolphe, and reiterating their friendly assurances to Dupont.

Each one retired to his own chamber, carrying with him very different memories of the feast of Saint Eustache. Bidois alone had not returned. In going to Ile d'Amour, he had not met the carriage because it came from the direction of the barrière, and when he reached the restaurant, where his singular headgear aroused all the scullions to merriment, he sought in vain for Adolphe and the hack. He traversed a part of the village again, then decided to return to the Café Vert.

He entered, and asked for his party.

"Where are they?" he demanded, putting the basket under his arm.

"They went away in the hack," replied the proprietor of the café, with rather a scornful air.

"They went without me?"

"They called you. Is your name not Belloie?"

"Bidois, if you please."

"Bidois, or Belloie; it is almost the same thing."

"No, monsieur; on the contrary, it is very different."

"Well, Monsieur Bidois, they went without you, as you did not return."

"Went without me! Leaving me to go back on foot, in such weather as this, when I have worn myself out all day carrying their dinner! Ah, Madame Bernard was right when she called Madame Moutonnet a tyrant."

"They cannot have gone very far yet; run a little; I wager you will overtake them before they reach the limits. It is a yellow hack."

"Do you believe I can do it? Well, in that case I will take up my march again."

Bidois left the café and began to run, in spite of the storm, hoping to catch the fortunate carriage, which would have been rather a difficult matter; for the Moutonnet family had reached Rue Saint Denis, while the poor clerk had not yet gone as far as the Café Desnoyers. But the proprietor of the restaurant took pleasure in making M. Bidois run.

At last, after he had passed the barrier, our runner saw a hack.

"Ah, there they are at last," he said. "I shall rest now. A little courage. The sight of the hack has doubled my strength."

He hurried on, walking recklessly through ditches and puddles, for he decided to sacrifice his stockings, and at last caught up with a yellow hack, such as had been described to him at the café. Without waiting to ascertain if it really contained the people for whom he was searching, Bidois hurried to the coachman.

"Stop! stop!" he called, in a voice broken by fatigue.

The coachman, believing that he was mistaken, did not listen.

"Stop now!" cried Bidois again. "I tell you that the persons you are carrying are waiting for me, and you will have some drink money."

"Ah, it is different if they are your acquaintances," said the coachman, stopping his horses. "In that case, get up, mister."

Bidois did not wait for the invitation to be repeated. As soon as the hack stopped he ran to open the door. A cry issued from the interior of the carriage, —

"Ah, mon Dieu, it is my husband!" cried a woman's voice, which Bidois did not recognize.

"Her husband!" replied a man, whom Bidois had not perceived, because he was completely hidden by the lady.

"Ah, quick! Let us fly!"

There was a sudden movement inside the vehicle; the door opened on the opposite side from that at which Bidois had presented himself, and

"Ah, quick! Let us fly!"

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the gentleman escaped, leaving his hat; the lady fled, forgetting her shawl, her gloves and her handkerchief; and Bidois stood nonplussed upon the carriage step.

"Well, now, what does that mean, old fellow?" said the coachman, astonished to see the patrons he was carrying escaping from the other door.

"Ah, parbleu," replied Bidois, descending to the ground; "that means that bad luck pursues me. I have made a mistake, and the people I am seeking were not in your hack."

"Ah, is that so? Very well. You are a nice Colas to play me a joke like that."

"What do you mean by Colas? Do you believe it is for my pleasure that I did it?"

"Why, yes, my man. But understand that I can't allow it to pass like that. You have scared the couple I was carrying so thoroughly that they have made off. As for me, I cannot lose my fare. — Whoa, Fifi! — I got my people at Pelletan, at the Pavillon Français, and as it is outside the limits they promised me a little crown; so now you will have to give me that crown."

"I give you a crown? I?"

"Yes, my man, if that is agreeable to you."

"You are joking, of course. Shall I pay the fare of people whom I don't know?"

"It is only right you should. You drove away my customers, and you will pay me or we shall see about it."

The coachman, fearing that Bidois would escape, sprang from his seat; but the old clerk had not strength to fly, and allowed himself to be caught by the arm.

"There! pay, and let us be done with this."

"I shall not pay," replied Bidois decidedly, "because I owe you nothing."

"Very well; in that case we will return to the station-house at the barrière, and they will make you hear reason, my little man."

As he said these words the coachman turned his hack, and carried Bidois to the station, where he explained the adventure to the clerk and the commandant of the post.

"But you have that which will pay you," said Bidois; "they left their property in your carriage."

"What do you take me for,—a thief? I shall leave all that at the Préfecture."

"I wager no one will ever claim them."

"That does not concern me. What business have you to upset everybody like this?—and with your head in a basket! I am not surprised that you frightened them; they must have taken you for a devil."

Everyone laughed at the piteous expression of M. Bidois' face when he heard himself condemned to pay the little crown to the coachman; and in feeling in his pockets for his purse he let fall the remains of the turkey which he had with-

drawn from the basket before putting it on his head. This incident redoubled the gayety of all the people about him.

"It seems that monsieur leaves nothing behind when he goes to dine at the restaurant," said the clerk, laughing.

"Monsieur, that is my own affair," responded Bidois, stuffing the turkey into his pocket with considerable ill-humor; "you are not going to make me pay an admission fee for this turkey's thigh?"

"No, monsieur; turkeys do not pay."

"That is very fortunate. Come on, coachman; since I have paid, I hope at least you will let me ride."

"Ah, that is only fair."

"Where were you to take this lady and gentleman?"

"They told me to leave them on the Boulevard du Temple."

"Very well; drop me at the Porte Saint Martin."

"Enough said; follow me."

They left the barrière to go in search of the coach. It still rained, and Bidois said to himself, in a low tone,—

"At least, if I have paid a little dear, I can stretch myself in comfort, and sleep till I reach the Porte Saint Martin."

Poor Bidois! It was no doubt written in the

book of destiny that you should not return in a coach to Paris.

When they had almost reached the coach, our clerk saw four soldiers in advance of him. They were more agile than he, and they quickly opened the door, and threw themselves into the hack, exclaiming, —

"At last we have found one. This is not so bad."

"What does that mean?" cried Bidois, in his turn approaching the door of the vehicle, — "at last they have found one. Very well; that would be charming. — But one moment! Gentlemen, gentlemen, this carriage is mine for an hour," he said, climbing upon the step.

"I have no money, old fellow," said one of the soldiers, mistaking Bidois for one of the porters, which was quite excusable, considering the deplorable state to which the storm had reduced his toilet. "Another time I will remember you."

They pushed him rudely off and closed the door.

"A moment, gentlemen. For whom do you take me?" exclaimed Bidois again, trying to cling to the door. "I am a citizen of Paris. I have engaged this hack, and I have even paid in advance for it, so it is mine; you cannot take it."

"You see very well we can, since we are in it."

"You must get out, gentlemen. Coachman, explain my affair to these gentlemen."

The coachman, only too pleased to win a new fare, mounted his seat, and made no response to the appeals of Bidois, who ran from the door to the coachman, and from the coachman to the door.

"This old fool will deafen us, if he keeps on," said one of the soldiers.

"Gentlemen, you must get out of my hack," repeated Bidois.

"Get out of the carriage to give it to monsieur? Ah, you rascal, if I get out of here, it will be to cut off your ears. Go on, coachman; make haste; we are in a hurry, and cannot listen to this old drunkard."

"That is enough, officer."

The coachman whipped his horses, and the carriage disappeared from Bidois' sight. Overwhelmed by this new event, he seated himself against a milestone, gazing with an air of consternation at the disappearing hack, which carried away his crown, and left him there after having taken his money; but Bidois recalled that the commandant and even the soldiers seemed to be laughing at him, and he did not wish to be exposed to their merriment again.

"Come on," he said, "we must make the best of it. I will go back on foot. I will not run after any more hacks. This journey has been wretched. The accursed Saint Eustache celebrations always bring me bad luck; last year, I pretended to be

ill for a week beforehand, so as not to be present. Much obliged for a party of pleasure like this, to carry baskets that weigh a ton, do errands, have no time to rest, be beaten, be caught in a storm, run after a coach, pay double fare without even entering it, and receive nothing but mockeries; that is the history of this day. At such a price a dinner on the grass is very costly. I would rather take pot-luck every day."

Reflecting thus, Bidois at last reached the lace shop; he entered by the side door and went up to his chamber without a candle, rather than venture into the kitchen to get a light, fearing that if he met Madame Moutonnet she would find him another errand, so to avoid a fresh misfortune he hastened to bed.

CHAPTER V

A Young Girl's Confidences

It was long after Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet had retired to their chamber. They had gone to bed, and were, no doubt, sleeping the sleep of the just; for, at the age of our two married people, marked events, such as birthdays and marriage anniversaries, do not ever produce a very long insomnia. There is a time for everything, says the sage. Alas! would it not be better if there were time only for pleasure?

On their return home, Eugénie, after saying good-night to her parents, had gone upstairs to her room. But in passing by the kitchen, near which Jeanneton slept, she had half opened the door, and had said to the maid, in a low voice,—

"Wait until everybody is asleep and then I will come down and we will have a little talk. Oh, I have so many things to tell you, my dear Jeanneton."

"All right, mamzelle," Jeanneton had answered; "I will wait for you."

When the quiet which reigned all over the house led the young girl to think that her parents were slumbering, she softly left her room, step-

ping with great precaution on each stair; at the least sound she shivered and stopped, — and yet she was doing nothing wrong, for it was no crime to go to talk with the sympathetic Jeanneton. But if Madame Moutonnet had known that her daughter dared to leave her room at night, Eugénie would have been scolded and overwhelmed with reproaches, while Jeanneton would surely have been discharged. No wonder she was afraid.

How pretty she looked, when, attired only in a little petticoat and dressing-sack, her head-dress a tiny checked handkerchief tied over her beautiful hair, she secretly quitted her solitary couch to glide into the chamber of the maid! The emotions, the fears which agitated her, caused a more frequent rising and falling of her bosom; her hand trembled, her breath was short; she was charming, seductive, bewitching, — beauty and innocence fearing to yield to the novel sensations which caused her heart to palpitate.

She groped her way to the kitchen door, for she carried no light for fear of being seen, and Jeanneton had placed her candle in the back of the chimney, that no one might see it and come to inform Madame Moutonnet that her servant slept with her light burning. So many precautions in order to talk for a moment in freedom! Yet the situation had its peculiar charm. We are aware that to double the value of a thing it is only necessary to forbid it, especially for that sex

which has so pronounced an inclination for forbidden fruit, despite successive examples of melancholy events that have been brought about by this tendency to disobedience. But in vain, since our Mother Eve, does one relate the history of Pandora, of Psyche, of Lot's wife, and even of Bluebeard's curious dame; the ladies shudder with fright, but are all ready to do likewise, impelled, no doubt, by some secret influence.

"Here I am, my dear," said Eugénie, entering the maid's room and noiselessly closing the door. "Everybody is asleep; we can chat for a moment."

"But, mamzelle, it seems to me that Bidois is not back yet, and if he comes in here after a light—"

"He is at home and gone to bed, I tell you; I heard him come in."

"Bah! without a candle?"

"Apparently, but I heard him plainly. Isn't his room beneath mine? He is snoring so loudly that one can hear him on the street."

"Ah, well, in that case, we have nothing to fear. He's such an old blabber and sneak, always fawning after your mother to put himself in her good graces, one can't help distrusting him; but since he is snoring we may talk. Tell me everything that happened; from the few words your mother let fall it appears to me there were many adventures."

"Ah, I never had such a good time!"

"Then I misunderstood; it seemed to me there were quarrels and disputes, and even fighting with the peasants."

"Yes, that is too true."

"And Madame Moutonnet quarrelled with Madame Bernard, for I heard her say, as she came in, that she would never see her again; and, my! she seemed angry enough then."

"Yes, that's true; she was in a terrible temper."

"And didn't that make you all afraid?"

"I scarcely noticed it."

"Mon Dieu! that's funny. And it rained as you came back?"

"Yes, and that delighted me."

"Well, I don't understand it."

"But just think, Jeanneton; coming back in the carriage I sat next to him."

"Who is 'him,' mamzelle?"

"M. Adolphe."

"Oh, M. Adolphe. Oh, I begin to understand why you had such a pleasant day; it was because M. Adolphe was there."

"Yes, Jeanneton; that was the reason. If you only knew how polite he is."

"Did he talk to you much?"

"He was with me nearly all day."

"Bah! and your mamma said nothing?"

"Oh, mamma didn't notice it. And then we had so many chances to talk, while dancing and running, and playing hide-and-seek."

"Oh, you played hide-and-seek?"

"Yes, Jeanneton; and M. Dupont was always 'it.'"

"Oh, yes; I should expect he would be 'it' often — the idea! And Madame Moutonnet, who sees everything, — she didn't see that. How did she come to let you play hide-and-seek?"

"Why, do you see anything wrong in that, Jeanneton?"

"Ah, well, mamzelle, if I had a daughter I would rather take her to the theatre sometimes than let her play hide-and-seek in a wood. But people who take so many precautions are often very unwise. That remark, however, isn't meant in regard to your mother. But what did M. Adolphe say to you that amused you so much?"

"Oh, Jeanneton, I am dying to tell you."

"Go on; tell me everything; I am not your mother."

"Well, Jeanneton, he told me that he loved me, that he adored me, and he has promised to love me all his life. Oh, Jeanneton, I am sure he meant it, and that he will not deceive me."

"But, mamzelle, you must not believe all the things these young gentlemen tell you; they will say as much to any pretty woman. They don't think any more of making love than I do of turning an omelette; but you mustn't trust them."

"But, Jeanneton, I am sure Adolphe is not like other young men. If you knew how sweet

his voice is;—and then his eyes— He seemed so happy when he looked at me, and he looked at me all the time."

"Then you must have looked at him, mamzelle."

"Oh, no; but I saw without seeming to see, and when he took my hand in his how he pressed it! I trembled, but it was with pleasure. Ah, Jeanneton, I cannot tell you how happy I am!"

"Mon Dieu, mamzelle; you have gone a long way upon the road of love in a very short time. You know as much about it as I do myself."

"Oh, Jeanneton, if I hadn't told you all that, I think I should have had to talk to my walls to-night; for I had to speak of him."

"Poor little thing! How deeply you have fallen in love, all of a sudden!"

"He called me Eugénie,—his dear Eugénie!"

"The devil! but that was a declaration."

"Oh, yes, my dear; and he made it very fully."

"And what did you reply to him?"

"Ah, Jeanneton, at first I could not answer. I had not the strength; I was so disturbed, so excited."

"Goodness! That was very natural."

"But at last he begged me to say something, and I could not resist; I told him I loved him."

"That you loved him! What, mamzelle! Does one say that the first day?"

"But it seems as if I had always known him,

and always loved him. And it seems as if he must know that I loved him; of course I did wrong to tell him, but I could not help it."

"Poor Eugénie! And what do you hope from all this?"

"I do not know; but if Adolphe loves me always, shall I not be happy? Adolphe,—what a pretty name! Ah, I love to repeat it, to hear it; I beg you to say it to me often."

"But, mamzelle, it is the same as any other name."

"As any other! How can you say that? Is Adolphe like—like Dupont, for instance? Oh, that is a frightful name; I cannot endure it."

"I'll engage Madame Moutonnet will like the other no better."

"My dear, he has promised to pass the shop every day, to look in at the counter and bow to me; and if mamma is not there he will say good-day."

"Yes, and Bidois will see him and tell your mother."

"Oh, no; he will see nothing; besides, if we can't speak we shall see each other, and that will always be a great pleasure."

"Ah, mamzelle, don't you see that this love affair will perhaps cause you much sorrow?" said Jeanneton, shaking her head and stooping to snuff the candle at the back of the hearth; while Eugénie, who had been to the window to see if all

was quiet, returned reassured, and reseated herself near the maid.

"Jeanneton, why do you think that my love for Adolphe will bring me sorrow? I am much happier today than I was yesterday."

"Certainly; it is always so in the beginning; but afterwards? — for what will be the end of all this, mamzelle?"

"I have already told you that I know nothing about it."

"In a little while, perhaps, your parents — that is to say, your mother — will be wanting to marry you."

"Marry me! Oh, well, my dear, if it could be to him."

"There is no hope of that; this young man has no money; your mamma will never consent to that."

"Ah, Jeanneton, you distress me."

"I have an idea that Madame Moutonnet has already made a choice for you, and if she wants it, you know the devil himself could not make her give way. The husband she will give you will not be so nice as M. Adolphe, but he will be rich, and that is the essential part at present. You will be very well established, and in the future you will be happy. Wait, mamzelle; believe me, and do not let this new love take hold of your heart; it will cause you much trouble in the future. Believe Jeanneton, who loves you — to whom

you are dear. Ah, mamzelle, if I am only a country girl, I have loved also, and I remember what it is. Jerome, my lover, was very nice, I can assure you, and he swore that he loved me tenderly; he did not tell it so prettily perhaps as M. Adolphe, but it gave me as much pleasure."

"Well, my dear, why didn't you marry him?"

"Do you think things always go smoothly? Jerome's parents had money; I had none. They forbade him to see me, under penalty of being sent from the village; and when he saw they were determined, do you know what he did?"

"No, dear Jeanneton."

"Well, one fine morning he left; he went away from his father's house and the village, swearing he would never come back; in fact, since then no one has heard a word of him. Perhaps he enlisted, perhaps he went aboard of some vessel; but he is dead without doubt. Poor Jerome! and I am the cause of it."

Jeanneton interrupted herself to lift her apron to her eyes, which the memory of her lover again filled with tears.

"You see, Jeanneton, that you still love him," said Eugénie, touched by the maid's sorrow, which her heart could fully comprehend.

"Yes, mamzelle, though it was ten years ago, I cannot think of Jerome without being quite upset; and, although I am only twenty-seven years old, and not so bad-looking, I shall never have another

sweetheart. I do not wish to love any more. A great many have made eyes at me and tried to coax me with this and that, but it does not go. It is ended. After Jerome, I cannot listen to anyone."

"That is because you loved him so much."

"But that does not prevent my saying to you that these loves which are opposed by the parents never turn out well. No, mamzelle; do not yield to your passion for M. Adolphe, and, while it is quite a new thing, forget him."

"What! forget him, you say? I should forget him? and it is you, Jeanneton, who give me this advice? Forget one whom I have promised to love all my life! Forget one who has sworn to think only of me, to breathe only for me! Ah, I should have to possess a very cold, a very unfeeling heart, and even a very selfish one, to forget poor Adolphe. He would die because of it, I am certain."

"No, mamzelle; men never die of love, and it is very seldom that women do."

"And I tell you he would die of it, mademoiselle! I know him better than you. Besides, your Jerome died for you; why are you not willing that Adolphe should love me just as much?"

"If Jerome died in the army or on the sea, that is not the same thing."

"It was on account of his attachment for you; but you do not feel that, Jeanneton; you reason

as if you were sixty years old. You are astonished that I love, that anyone loves me; you wish me to forget Adolphe. Ah, it is horrible, Mademoiselle Jeanneton, to say such things to me. This is the end of it. I shall never confide in you again. I see well that you do not love me."

"Ah, well, that is a new idea," said Jeanneton, hastening to detain Eugénie, who was going away with a swelling heart. "I am not attached to you, perhaps! Ah, mamzelle, it is very bad of you to say that to me. I only told you what I felt it my duty to tell. If you wish to love M. Adolphe, love him! I will not oppose you; on the contrary, I will do everything you wish. Is not my only desire to see you happy? Ah, I would go through fire for you. But for you should I not have left this house a hundred times? For Madame Moutonnet, though she may be your mother, is very difficult to satisfy; but I have endured everything because of my attachment to you, and you tell me I do not love you! Ah, mamzelle, I have not merited that reproach, and it hurts me very much."

Eugénie ran, and threw herself into the maid's arms; she asked her pardon, she consoled her, she kissed her.

"My dear Jeanneton," she said to her, "do not think any more of that, I pray you. Ah, I know your good heart. But you will not forbid me to love Adolphe?"

"Oh, no, mamzelle; quite the contrary."

"You will let me talk to you of him?"

"Oh, as much as you please."

"You will talk to me about him, too, sometimes?"

"Yes, mamzelle, I promise you."

"Ah, dear Jeanneton, how happy I shall be! Ah, I shall try to come down every evening, even if it is only for a moment, to talk with you. We will speak of him, and then sometimes you will tell me of Jerome."

"Oh, no, mamzelle; I will not talk any more. Your love makes you happy, but mine brings the tears."

"My poor Jeanneton!"

Eugénie sat down again beside the maid; it was late, but the young girl had not the least desire for sleep. Her young head was already disturbed, and her heart—ah, her heart was no longer her own.

"Jeanneton," she said, drawing her chair nearer to that of the maid, "if my mother would become softened, if she would consent to let me marry Adolphe, how happy I should be! I would take you with me to my new home. You would be glad to go—would you not?"

"Oh, yes, mamzelle."

"There the time would never hang heavy on our hands. It would be so sweet to me to work beside him, for I should never want him to go

away during the day; that would be possible, I hope."

"I believe so, mamzelle."

"I should always work beside him. We should never go out without each other. We should always have the same thoughts, the same desires, the same will. Ah, should I not be happy to do everything he wished? It would be so sweet to obey the person one loves best. That is a pleasure — is it not, Jeanneton?"

"Yes, of course, mamzelle."

"On holidays we should go out walking. You would go with us, Jeanneton, for you would not prevent us from talking of our love."

"No, mamzelle."

"If my husband wanted to travel, oh, certainly I should go with him. I should follow him everywhere; that is decided. Besides, Adolphe would not wish to be separated from me, either; and it is very proper for a woman to travel with her husband — is it not?"

"Yes, mamzelle. Oh, that is not forbidden."

"But it is not yet certain that we shall travel. If we are very rich, we will have a little country house. In what direction, do you think?"

"Goodness, mamzelle, in whatever direction you please."

"Ah, near Romainville. Yes, that is it; we will have a little house at Romainville, quite near the woods; then we can go walking there as often

as we please without fear of being scolded. What happiness! Our house shall be simple but convenient. We shall have a garden, which we will cultivate ourselves. We shall watch the flowers grow that we have planted. It will be very pleasant; I have always wanted a garden. And then in the country one rises at dawn, and while you prepare the breakfast we will take a little walk in the neighborhood. We shall return very tired, and dying of hunger, and everything will taste delicious to us. After breakfast we shall work, we shall put the house in order. Adolphe will write or read. After dinner we shall go to the garden, and stay there until night. We shall see how our plants are growing, then we shall come back, always gay and content. Ah, my dear, what a happy life!"

"Yes, yes, mamzelle," responded Jeanneton, stretching out her arms and turning in her chair to try to overcome the sleep which was overpowering her. "Oh, that will be very sweet!"

"That is not all, Jeanneton. Of course, we shall have children, for that is usual in a home. Ah, how I shall love them! How I shall cherish them! I shall not want them to be afraid of me; I wish to be their friend as well as their mother. It will be so sweet to have their confidence. If I have a boy, I shall call him Adolphe, and my daughter shall be named Adolphine. I will nurse them myself. I am sure that my husband would

prefer it, for one would love them still more in that way. What a pleasure it will be when my son begins to talk, and how we shall listen for his first words! And when he walks, ah, I will not lose sight of him for a single moment. When I am tired carrying him, Adolphe will take him in his arms, will rock him, will make him play — ah, sometimes also, I will let you take him, my dear; but you will have to be very careful of him, lest you should let him fall."

"No, no, mamzelle," responded Jeanneton, half asleep. "Oh, I promise you I will not let him fall."

"We shall educate him ourselves, or, at least, we shall watch over his education by giving him masters at home; for I should not like to have him sent away to school. Sometimes a child becomes a very bad boy, like that little Bernard. And then they forget their parents; ah, I should prefer him to learn less and to love me more. Then, I would give him his choice of a profession, for it seems to me that it is not right to force the inclinations of children. Is it not so, Jeanneton?"

Jeanneton did not reply, because she had fallen asleep; but Eugénie did not observe it, and went on.

"But if it should happen that my son should want to be a soldier? Good Heavens, what trouble that would cause me! It is very nice to have a

uniform, a sword, and sometimes a medal of honor. Ah, I understand that this might attract a young man; but what dangers he would encounter! He would be obliged to go with the army; he would be obliged to fight! — to fight! Ah, if I knew that my son was going to fight, I should not have a moment's rest. I should see him on the field of battle, surrounded by his enemies, and the balls, the bullets, flying round his head. He might be wounded, he might be killed. Ah, Jeanneton, if my son were killed, what would Adolphe say? And I — no, no, I should not want him to be a soldier. Ah, my dear, do you not agree with me? But, what! you do not answer?"

Eugénie looked at Jeanneton and perceived for the first time, and with surprise, that the maid was sound asleep. This realization scattered all the castles in the air, all the delicious dreams which filled the mind of the sweet girl; she had no longer a son, a husband, a country house; she was again at her parents' home, seated in the room of the maid. She sighed; her happiness was only a dream, and it had vanished.

One's waking dreams are always agreeable, because one arranges them according to his fancy. How many young girls like Eugénie have passed and will pass sleepless hours creating a happiness which they will never taste in reality! When one loves one abandons oneself to the delights of the sweet future which the imagination creates. The

young lover sees himself beside his mistress; she is faithful, she adores him; if a few clouds rise between them, they are soon scattered, and the sweetest intoxication always presides over their reconciliations. The young girl hears her lover address to her the most tender confessions, swear to love her all his life, and then demand her hand of her parents; she sees herself walking to the altar with her sweet friend in her charming virginal costume, and more beautiful than ever with the added radiance of love, modesty and happiness.

Delicious dreams! You are worth much more than those of the conqueror, the ambitious man and the courtier; you leave in the soul only a sweet languor; and, while other passions rouse our senses and weary our minds, dreams of love, on the contrary, bring us sweet refreshment from the anxieties of life. Those are less happy than Eugénie whose desires extend beyond the radius of the domestic circle.

Heroes who have dreamed of the conquest of the world, sovereigns who long to see their names famous in history, ministers who dream of complete power, courtiers who dream of honor, your awakening is much more painful than that of the grisette who dreams of a meeting with her lover.

But the clock of Saint Nicholas had struck the hour of two, and Eugénie, astonished that it was so late, did not understand why the time had

passed more quickly for her who talked, than for Jeanneton, who listened.

"Two o'clock in the morning," she said, quitting her chair with regret. "I have never been up so late. I did not suppose it was midnight. Ah, if mamma knew it. I am not surprised that Jeanneton has gone to sleep. It is really time to go to bed; but it is a pity; I would gladly spend the night in talking. — Go to bed, my dear," added Eugénie, shaking Jeanneton's arm. "Go to bed quickly; it is very late."

"Yes, mamzelle," responded Jeanneton, without opening her eyes; and the stout girl undressed mechanically, and sought her couch without being entirely awakened.

Eugénie left the maid's room softly, crossed the kitchen, and prepared to mount the staircase to regain her chamber. As she put her foot upon the steps and took hold of the baluster, she heard a noise as if someone had fallen several steps on the staircase beyond her. Eugénie trembled, and dared not move. She looked above and saw no light. Who could have made that noise, — her father, her mother, or M. Bidois? Ordinarily, none of them went about without a light; could it be a thief? In any case, the poor girl had but one resource, and that was to avoid the person who was coming down. She had closed and locked the kitchen door, so she could not take refuge there.

As she stood still, undecided and trembling, she heard a voice, and was somewhat reassured.

"This certainly is my unlucky day," growled Bidois, for it was he. After all the inconvenience and disasters of the day, he was obliged to descend in the middle of the night, and he was groping his way as best he could. "As for me, who never fall, to roll four steps of this cursed stairway! I have skinned the whole length of my spine. I hope the others did not hear me. Oh, oh, what misery! Was the ham poisoned? My faith! I believe it almost, or else it was the veal. Mademoiselle Jeanneton did not scour her saucepan clean, or it was that grocer's wretched anisette, which was not good at all, and it tasted of drugs. I am sure Dupont made it himself. His present was a nice medicine. I wish he had it all in his stomach. Bah!"

Grumbling thus, Bidois descended the stairs. He was very near Eugénie, who still wondered how she could avoid meeting the old clerk. She loosened her grasp of the baluster and pressed herself against the wall, taking up as little space as possible and maintaining the most profound silence, and waited for him to pass, that she might regain her room, which she now wished she had never left. The fatal moment arrived. Bidois, dragging his legs after him, and holding on to the baluster with both hands for fear of falling, had almost passed Eugénie, seeing noth-

ing. In a few moments she would have had nothing to fear, when suddenly an unexpected sneeze, which she had not time to repress, gave the alarm, and was followed by a complete change of scene.

"Oh, there is someone in the house. Thieves! thieves!" cried Bidois, pressing himself against the balustrade and not knowing whether to go up or down. Eugénie, seeing that she would certainly be discovered if she stayed where she was, flew upstairs, and in a moment had regained her chamber and her bed.

The old clerk heard the steps going hastily up the staircase, and did not doubt that thieves were entering the house; and he continued to shriek with all his strength, striking with his feet and fists upon the walls and staircase, in order to make a noise which would awaken everybody. The racket which Bidois produced could not fail to arouse Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet.

"Good God!" said Madame Moutonnet, shaking her dear spouse vigorously; "do you hear, monsieur? do you hear? But good God! why don't you wake up?"

"What is it, sweetheart?" said the lace dealer, rolling over.

"What is it? Don't you hear these cries, this noise?"

"It must be in the street, no doubt, my angel."

"No, no, monsieur; I tell you I recognize Bidois' voice."

"Bibi — Bidois?"

"Why, yes; and he is calling for help. O heavens! suppose the house should be on fire! Fire!"

This electrifying word produced its ordinary effect. M. Moutonnet threw himself out of bed and followed Madame Moutonnet, who had opened a window looking on the court, and was asking Bidois what was the matter.

"Thieves! thieves!" answered Bidois, in a voice which terror rendered still more distressed. "They are in the house — they are on the staircase! They have gone up — but they will come down again! Come to my help quickly, or I am lost!"

"Thieves!" cried Madame Moutonnet.

"Thieves!" repeated the husband, hastily retiring to the back of the chamber.

"Monsieur Bidois," screamed Madame Moutonnet, "wake Jeanneton. We will call for assistance to the street. Eugénie, my daughter, lock yourself in. Help! help!"

Madame Moutonnet ran to open the window which looked on the street, and began to shout desperately, "Thieves!" in concert with Bidois; while her husband ran about the chamber looking everywhere but in the right place for an old gun which he carried when he walked in the

procession, but which he could not find in either closet, and his fright did not allow him to remember that he had locked it in the bottom of a chiffonnier. Jeanneton, roused by the racket which was going on in the house, believed that some misfortune had happened. Eugénie alone knew the cause of all this rumpus, but she took care to say nothing. She knew that the danger they all feared was imaginary, and she could not refrain from laughing in her room at the fright she had given Bidois.

Monsieur and Madame Moutonnet's screams had reached the ears of their neighbor the baker, who was kneading his first batch of bread, which would be taken away early in the morning by servants, workmen's wives and old bachelors. "Oh, ho!" said the baker to his journeymen, "there's an adventure in the neighborhood. Let us go and see if someone has attempted an infringement of the by-laws. The oven is not yet hot. Come along."

The men left the dough and followed their master, who walked toward the house from which the cries were heard.

"Ah, there come our liberators," cried Madame Moutonnet, on perceiving the three men, who came straight toward the house.

"Yes, truly," said M. Moutonnet, running to the window with his gun, which he had managed to find. "I believe they are the guards."

"Eh, no; they are the baker's men, and our neighbor, M. Pétrin. Somebody is coming at last. — Here, gentlemen! Somebody will open the door for you; somebody will come down," cried Madame. "Jeanneton, go open the shop door. Monsieur Pétrin, our house is full of thieves."

"All right; then we will catch them, Madame Moutonnet."

While Jeanneton was introducing M. Pétrin and his two journeymen into the shop, M. and Madame Moutonnet consulted as to whether they should leave their room. M. Moutonnet was of the opinion that they should remain there while the house was being searched, but Madame Moutonnet thought it would be better that she should direct the operations. Her opinions being always unanimously adopted, M. Moutonnet donned a dressing-gown and, gun in hand, prepared to follow his wife, who hastily invested herself in a morning wrapper. They found Bidois upon the stairway armed with Jeanneton's great kitchen knife in one hand, while with his other he held up his trousers, which at each step he took fell from his hands. They all three went down to the shop, where they found the bakers in the simple costume one assumes for the making of bread; while Jeanneton, startled out of her sleep, had just had time to put on a petticoat. But decency must always yield to fear, and Madame Moutonnet, who was usually very severe in matters of

dress and propriety, who had never consented to visit an exhibition of sculpture, and who had never faced Apollo or Antinous, was ready to fall upon the baker's neck and embrace his journeymen in this dreadful moment, because their presence would protect her from the danger she feared.

"What is the matter? What has happened at your house, Madame Moutonnet?" asked the baker in the honeyed accents which had made him the favorite of all the cooks of the neighborhood, who called him an elegant talker. "Shrieks and muffled cries issued from your house, and I said to the boys, 'We'll leave our dough and go to see what is up with our neighbors.'"

"Ah, Monsieur Pétrin, Providence has sent you. Without you we should be lost. Thank Heaven, you did not abandon us in this terrible moment."

"Madame, be calm. I am always proud to be at the service of the superior sex. But, once more, what is the matter?"

"Thieves, Monsieur Pétrin, — thieves."

"But, madame, where are they? How did they get in?"

"Bidois can tell us all; he discovered them. Speak, Bidois."

Bidois advanced, pale and trembling, and began his tale, interrupting himself now and again to readjust his trousers, which in the ardor of his recital he forgot sometimes to hold. "I was in bed

in my room sleeping badly — in fact, I did not sleep at all. I felt very unwell — a colic — something must have disagreed with me at dinner — "

"Never mind your colic," said Madame Moutonnet. "Come to an end."

"I am coming to it, madame. I left my room, and having no light I decided to grope my way softly downstairs so as to wake nobody. I had reached the second floor, opposite the shop, when my foot slipped. I lost my equilibrium, and I rolled four or five steps on my back."

"What a nuisance you are with your rollings! Have you nearly finished?"

"Yes, madame. I got up, and this time, grasping the baluster so I should not fall again, I descended towards the kitchen. I had nearly got to the foot when I heard a sudden noise not two steps from me. I wished to see the rascal, but there were more than one. I heard them climb the stairs as quick as they could, and they probably took refuge in the attic."

"My God!" said Madame Moutonnet, seizing M. Pétrin's arm.

"Ah, Heavens!" said her husband, leaning on his gun, on which was still a bouquet which one could not distinguish for flowers because it had been for some years in a chiffonnier.

"Is that so?" said Jeanneton, who did not look so frightened as the others, because she guessed what had frightened Bidois.

"We must search the house," cried the baker. "Come on, boys. Monsieur Moutonnet, give me your gun."

"Very willingly, Monsieur Pétrin."

"Is it loaded?"

"No, no; it is not, and I think it never has been."

"What the devil were you going to do with it then?"

"You are incorrigible, monsieur," said Madame Moutonnet to her husband; "your gun is never in order."

"But, my love, you know well that I am not in the habit of using it."

"Come, calm yourselves; our men will be sufficient, I hope," said the baker. "If they resist we will slaughter them."

"But if they fire on us?" said Bidois.

"Bah! thieves are never effectively armed. March!"

"But we had better put the ladies in a safe place," said M. Moutonnet.

"That's right."

"Come, we will lock ourselves in my daughter's room," said Madame Moutonnet.

They left the shop; the baker and his men walked in front, then Bidois, whose knife would have given him the air of a conspirator, if his trousers hanging about his heels had not denoted his imbecility. Madame Moutonnet followed

them, then her husband, who insisted on keeping his gun aimed, although he knew that it would not kill anyone, but thought that the sight would, without doubt, be sufficient to petrify the thieves. Jeanneton wound up the procession with two torches, with which she lighted the march of the bakers, passing sometimes before and sometimes behind, as the localities permitted.

They began by searching the court, where they found no one, at which they were not surprised, because Bidois had described the thieves as running upstairs. They reached the chamber of Eugénie. The young girl had just time to get into bed. They knocked at the door, and her mother commanded her to open it. Eugénie was not yet asleep; she slipped on a wrapper and let them in.

At sight of the young girl, whose calm and almost smiling air indicated no terror, M. Pétrin began a pretty compliment, in which he involved himself, until Madame Moutonnet fortunately interrupted him, asking her daughter how it happened that she was so tranquil when there were thieves in the house.

"Thieves?" asked Eugénie, glancing at Jeanneton. "But, mamma, I heard nothing."

"You are very happy, mademoiselle, in sleeping so very soundly; but we intend to shut ourselves up with you while these gentlemen are fighting for us. Ah, what a good thing it is that

we have liberators!" Eugénie lifted her eyes, but she dropped them again very quickly, because the costume of the liberators appeared to her a trifle too classic. Madame Moutonnet pushed her daughter and Jeanneton within, and, giving one of the torches to Bidois, "Go on," she said, "but by all means be prudent."

She closed the door and double-locked it, to the great discontent of her husband and of Bidois, who had both hoped to slip into the chamber with the ladies.

"This is a case where we need our heads and our presence of mind," said M. Pétrin. "We will pursue the enemy to his lair. March ahead, old fellow; you know the way; you will guide us."

"Much obliged," said Bidois, "but if I carry the light I cannot use my knife. It will be better if one of the boys takes the torch. I can show you the way just as well if I walk behind; besides, M. Moutonnet ought to do the honors."

"Never mind," said the lace dealer; "I trust entirely to the zeal of these gentlemen."

The baker saw that it would be impossible to make M. Moutonnet or his clerk lead the way. He decided to take charge of the campaign himself. Beginning at the second story, they searched the shop carefully. They passed to the third. M. Bidois had left his door half open. They searched everything. They looked under the bed and up the chimney.

"Surely, they must be in the attic," said M. Moutonnet.

"Yes, yes; that's where I thought they were," said Bidois.

They went on in silence toward the attic. When they arrived before the door, which was only closed with the latch, they heard a loud noise, followed by deep silence.

"This time we have them," said the baker.

"Wha—wha—what did I tell you?" muttered Bidois. His limbs shook under him, while M. Moutonnet was obliged to lean upon his gun.

"Don't you think Bidois had better go and call the police?" he murmured in a scarcely audible voice.

"Yes, yes; you are right, monsieur," exclaimed Bidois, delighted that he should escape the necessity of entering the attic.

The old clerk was about to descend, but the baker seized him briskly by the arm. "We don't need any help," he said. "My boys and I are solid as posts. It's useless to call anybody in."

As he finished speaking, M. Pétrin rushed into the attic, whirling his stick. "Give yourselves up, scoundrels!" he cried in a stentorian voice, while the two journeymen followed him, brandishing their clubs. M. Moutonnet and Bidois pretended to enter, but they stood shaking on the threshold, ready to descend immediately if any resistance were encountered.

But as the thieves existed only in Bidois' imagination, no one responded to the call of the baker, who advanced courageously, followed by his boys, and went to the end of the attic without discovering anything. Arrived there, he noticed a movement under a long board on a pile of old wood in the corner of the room. Pétrin made a sign to his men. All three advanced, lifted their clubs and struck at the same time; but instead of the groans of the thief, which they expected to hear, they were answered by a fearful miauling which reëchoed through the attic. One of the boys lifted the plank and discovered a wretched cat, with its back broken.

At this sight the baker burst into a roar of laughter, in which his men joined him heartily.

"We are the victors, it seems," said M. Moutonnet to Bidois. "Do you hear them? They are shouting victory; we can now join them." And these two gentlemen, entering the garret, asked if they had well beaten the thieves.

"We've got one of them," cried M. Pétrin, "and I assure you he's not very terrifying." As he said this the baker threw at Bidois' feet the cat which they had slain.

"What does that mean?" exclaimed M. Moutonnet, while Bidois looked with a horrified air at the poor cat extended before him.

"That means, my neighbor," replied the baker, "that there are no more thieves in your house

than in my oven, where your old clerk deserves to be roasted, to teach him not to set the whole neighborhood in an uproar because he has the colic. Come on, boys; we've wasted enough time over a cat; let's go back to the dough."

As he said this M. Pétrin descended the staircase with his men, laughing at Bidois' terror, which next day would be the joke of the neighborhood.

M. Moutonnet was left alone with his clerk, whom he regarded with an air half fearful and half mocking.

"What do you think of it?" he asked, after a long silence.

"I know they didn't half look," replied the old clerk angrily; "but, anyway, it's my day of bad luck, and I might have known this would turn against me."

Bidois returned to his room and double-locked the door, for he was convinced that the baker was mistaken, and that there were thieves concealed in the house.

The ladies had heard M. Pétrin leave with his men, and they opened the door for M. Moutonnet with great impressiveness.

"It was nothing," said that gentleman, wiping his forehead; "we found only a cat, which we killed."

"What do you say?" cried madame;—"that, just for a cat, Bidois has upset the house and put

the whole neighborhood in an uproar, and almost given me a nervous attack?"

"Well, it seems he decided this morning to play tricks all day."

"Well, he shall pay me for this tomorrow. Now, go to bed, my daughter; return to your room, Jeanneton; and you, monsieur, come with me."

M. Moutonnet followed his dear spouse, and replaced in the bottom of the chiffonnier the old gun, which he ought never to have taken out. As Eugénie passed the maid, she contrived to whisper very softly, "It was I," and Jeanneton promised herself a good laugh when she reached her chamber.

CHAPTER VI

The Plot Unfolds. The Day of Betrothal

The calm usually follows the storm, or perhaps we might rather say, as Don Quixote's doughty squire would have said, "The days succeed, but they do not resemble each other." Upon the day following M. Moutonnet's little birthday party everybody in the lace-dealer's household resumed his or her customary mode of life and daily occupations.

By seven o'clock in the morning the worthy M. Moutonnet was as usual seated before his ledger, old Bidois was assiduously casting up his accounts, Eugénie was busily employed at her needlework behind the counter, Jeanneton was sweeping vigorously, while Madame Moutonnet came and went, and gave her orders from the top to the bottom of the house.

Before arriving at this satisfactory and peaceful point, however, they had been obliged to listen to a little temporary lecture, rather more searching and virulent in its character than usual; but they had all expected it would be so and were therefore prepared for the storm. Monsieur Moutonnet had been severely taken to task for the

thousand liberties of conduct and speech which he had permitted himself the day before in the wood at Romainville, but especially for being separated from his wife during the scene of the ball. Bidois was scolded for the several blunders he had made, while he received a very severe reprimand for the fright he had caused during the night. The culprits listened in silence, which is the best corrective of anger.

M. Moutonnet and his clerk were familiar with the procedure of Socrates, or, rather, they made use of it by a natural instinct which, when we have not been taught, makes us feel the manner in which we should conduct ourselves in unfavorable circumstances. This secret sentiment is good sense, and it must be confessed that it is oftener followed by simple than by clever people.

Still, while he mended his pen, — which, by the way, Bidois did more than ten times a day, — the old clerk was secretly persuaded that during the previous night someone had been introduced into the house; but, as no one had been found and as he did not wish to be scolded by Madame Moutonnet, he was careful not to make his reflections before her, and said to himself, "If it were not a thief, it certainly was someone. Sooner or later I shall know whom."

Eugénie alone was not included in the reprimands which her mother dealt out; however, since last night she was the guiltiest one, peace was not

reëstablished in her mind. Poor child! it is to be feared that it will not again abide there. When love fills the mind of a young girl it does not leave her easily, for Cupid attaches himself more strongly to women than to men; perhaps the ladies treat him less lightly than do we.

Adolphe seized every opportunity to leave his shop, if it were but five minutes; for in those five minutes he found time to pass Eugénie, to look at her very tenderly, to say some passionate words to her, which, being said in an undertone, she did not hear, it is true; yet he read his answer in her eyes, because a young girl divines easily that which her lover would say to her, especially when that lover has obtained only the smallest favors.

When Madame Moutonnet happened to go out, Eugénie would stand on the threshold of the shop, as if to breathe the fresh air for a moment, and Adolphe, always watching, would make an errand outside, crossing over to Eugénie, and, in passing, he would press her hand, they would say a few words and be happy. For lovers such moments of happiness leave sweet memories for the rest of the day.

These glances, these half-uttered words, these pressures of the hand, stirred the fire which burned in these young hearts, the love which they felt gained new force each day; it occupied them entirely, it became for them a second existence. Adolphe breathed only for Eugénie, and she had

no longer a thought which was not connected with Adolphe. "He will pass soon," she said to herself each moment. "I shall see him, he will look at me, and perhaps this evening or tomorrow mamma will go out, and I shall be able to speak to him for a moment."

Jeanneton was still Eugénie's confidante. Each evening the buxom girl heard what had been done during the day; how many times Adolphe had passed the shop, what he had said and what he had done. She knew, even, how he was dressed; for a young girl in speaking of her sweetheart dwells upon the merest trifles, — trifles interesting only to lovers; but Jeanneton still sometimes dreamed of Jerome, and she appeared to listen with special attention when informed that Adolphe wore a black necktie and a blue coat.

While he mended his pens and made his computations, Bidois saw all that went on. He observed that for some time Eugénie had been deeply interested in the novelty shop. He heard her sigh when her mamma did not go out, noticed that she ran to the door when Madame Moutonnet left, and also perceived the same young man pass and repass without cessation before the shop; he recognized Adolphe, and, without appearing to attend to anything but business, Bidois watched the young people, and knew as well as Jeanneton, at the close of the day, how many times Adolphe had appeared, what Eugénie had

said to him, and even what kind of a coat and necktie he wore. Bachelors are almost as curious as spinsters in prying into everything that is going on.

Bidois laughed in secret at Madame Moutonnet, who, in spite of her severity and her extreme watchfulness, did not perceive the love of the young people. "By Jove!" said he to himself, "this promises us some famous scenes. I begin to believe now that it was not a thief who introduced himself into the house during the night. Ah, these young girls! these young girls! Who would believe it? — but hush! we will say nothing, and, appearing to see nothing, I will continue to observe everything."

Since the feast of Saint Eustache the Bernards did not visit at Madame Moutonnet's. The Gérards were often there, and still oftener friend Dupont, who not only appeared on Sundays, but who often left his shop during the week to visit at the lace dealer's. He was frequently invited to dinner, a favor which Madame Moutonnet granted only to her most intimate friends. Upon these days Eugénie was excused from working in the evening, and permitted to remain with the company; she played loto or Pope Joan with M. Dupont, who never failed to compliment her when he drew the balls, or faisant la bête, which he did with the best grace in the world, to the great delight of M. Moutonnet, who won so much

from the grocer that he began to consider himself strong at Pope Joan.

On the occasion of the grocer's visits, Eugénie could neither see nor speak to Adolphe. She detested Dupont, and, when he came, trembled lest he should be invited to dine. Bidois also formed his conjectures from these frequent visits; for the old clerk easily divined Madame Moutonnet's projects from the attentions she lavished upon Dupont, and, regarding that gentleman, often said to himself, "There is one who will make a good— He has the right face for it."

As time passed the intervals between M. Dupont's visits became shorter, and he was accorded a still warmer welcome in the lace dealer's family; Bidois remarked that there were many conferences between the parents and the young man, while Madame Moutonnet was less severe with her daughter and did not reprove her for taking pains with her toilet; and as Eugénie was in love, she was tempted in that direction.

Love always brings the desire to please, a very natural coquetry; for one wishes to appear pretty in the eyes of the adored object, and, whatever may be said, a little art never does any harm. It adds to the attractions which one already possesses; it conceals the slight imperfections of nature; in fact, to continue to please, one must never neglect entirely the care which one takes in order to be loved. O husbands! if you would not

wear cotton nightcaps which are extremely unbecoming; and you, ladies,— if in your homes you would always preserve the gentle and gracious manner which distinguishes you in society, perhaps one would see happier firesides. Love depends upon such little things. I once knew a lady who could not look her husband in the face after she had seen him without his perruque.

But, as a rule, it is when people no longer feel love themselves that they take less pains with their persons. Young man, be suspicious of your mistress when you see her coming to the rendezvous with her hair in curl papers.

Eugénie, who was deeply in love, forgot nothing that could render her attractive in Adolphe's eyes; but Madame Moutonnet, convinced that her daughter prepared her toilet for M. Dupont, called the grocer's attention to the fact, who did not doubt that Eugénie was very much pleased with him, though she said nothing to him which could indicate it, and pretended not to hear the compliments which he addressed to her; but this he accredited to her timidity and her good education.

Everything indicated that a great event was in preparation in the family of the lace dealer. M. Moutonnet had a more easy and genial air with his wife. He often went with Dupont to take a glass and play a game of dominoes; and when he undertook one of these important expeditions

he embraced his daughter with a half-mysterious, half-congratulatory air. He held her chin in his hand, and looked at her smilingly. Then he glanced at M. Dupont, who stood near, his hat under his arm.

"She is pretty at least," said the good hat dealer; "she is well brought up, she is clever, and she knows how to manage a house. She will be worthy of her mother. Hah! what a figure she has to stand behind a fine counter! What style! what eyes! She is really my portrait over again — is she not, Dupont?"

"Yes, certainly; she has exactly your nose."

"Yes, she has just my nose as it was twenty-five years ago, before I took snuff; and don't you think she has also my eyes?"

"Yes; excepting that yours are gray and hers are black, I don't see but they are exactly alike."

"Her forehead, now, is from her mother; it is a brow of genius, of character."

"Well, her forehead is not exactly like yours; as a rule she inherits from both parents; you can see the resemblance. It is like chocolate and cocoa."

"Yes, you are right, Dupont. We must get this little girl married. Hah! What do you think, Dupont?"

"I think — my faith! I think it would be as easy as grinding coffee."

"The stupid fellow cannot get away from his

groceries," said to himself in a low tone the old clerk, who was listening to the conversation of Moutonnet and his friend; while Eugénie paid very slight attention to it, for she had seen a young man pass the shop in a blue coat and black cravat.

While one love affair was carefully arranged behind the shop, another took its own course in front of it. Adolphe passed and repassed more frequently than ever, which brought him many reprimands from his employer; but he was in love, and he braved everything to see her he loved. He was entirely dependent on his small salary; what would become of him if he lost it? But one does not make these reflections when one is twenty-one and in love.

The young man had called upon Madame Moutonnet two or three times after the picnic and had done his best to win her good graces; but, though she had received him civilly enough, she did not care to have the young shopman come often to the house.

Ah, why had she invited him to come to the fête which was given in the wood of Romainville? He would not have addressed to Eugénie those tender confessions which had made such an impression on the heart of the poor little thing. The young girl would only have noticed Adolphe as one notices any handsome young man, and would not have yielded to the love which he in-

spired in her. Hiding her feelings in the depths of her soul, Eugénie perhaps would never have loved, and would have become the wife of M. Dupont without any unhappiness. Why, then, was Adolphe invited to this fête? Why? You already know; it was to avoid the number thirteen, — the fatal number which always attracts misfortune, as the good women assure us, the necromancers, the fortune-tellers, very respectable people, whom I advise you to consult, because they read the future by looking at coffee grounds, at melted lead or at the cross in your palm, — all of which does not usually prevent them from living in very poor lodgings and coming to a melancholy end. But these are mysteries which it is not our mission to penetrate, and in all that passes our feeble understanding we must preserve faith and humility.

Two months had rolled away since the famous celebration of Saint Eustache. They had passed rapidly for our two lovers, who saw each other every day, and did not weary of the expression of their love. Adolphe would have liked to find some other way of seeing Eugénie than on the street and merely in passing. But what could be done? The young man sought Jeanneton, whom he knew to be in the confidence of his sweetheart, and he begged her to let him come to her room in the evening and see Eugénie even for a few minutes in her presence. But the good girl

felt that if the young man were once introduced into the house, it would be very dangerous for Eugénie. Jeanneton knew the weakness of her sex, and divined all that a young man might undertake who knew that he was loved; so she armed herself with courage to refuse Adolphe, which required much resolution, for the prayers of a handsome bachelor were quite irresistible to the heart of the good girl.

The moment had come which would bring great events into the house of M. Moutonnet; and Bidois, who had seen, heard and understood all, impatiently awaited the important day.

One morning Madame Moutonnet went to her daughter's chamber quite early, and told her that Dupont would take breakfast with them, that she must dress nicely and come down to the little parlor behind the shop. She also informed her that she would be excused from work during the rest of the day.

Madame departed, and Eugénie, surprised at what her mother had just said, wondered why she should be excused from work because M. Dupont was coming to breakfast. Far from regarding the freedom as a favor, she sighed because it meant that she would not see Adolphe all day. This thought and the singular tone in which her mother had spoken made her heart beat, and filled her soul with sadness.

She dressed slowly. For the first time a thou-

sand memories rose in her imagination, and the grocer's frequent visits began to make her afraid. She trembled, she dreaded to see her suspicions realized, and remained in her room very sad and thoughtful. Jeanneton was busy below and could not talk over her troubles with her.

It was nine o'clock; she must go down. Eugénie left her chamber and went to the room where her family and M. Dupont were already awaiting her. Only Bidois was absent, for the old clerk was obliged to watch the shop, which angered him, because he felt sure something very important was about to take place in the dining-room. However, he came in as often as was possible, on various pretexts, but really to catch some words at least of the conversation.

"Come in, my daughter; come in," said Madame Moutonnet when she saw Eugénie trembling in the doorway. "Monsieur Dupont, go and give her your hand."

"That's right, that's right," said Dupont, as he rushed towards Eugénie. "That is just what I was going to do when I saw mademoiselle."

The grocer led Eugénie to a chair. She seated herself without saying a word; but the frequent heaving of her bosom showed that she waited the result of this meeting with anxiety. Papa Moutonnet appeared to desire to say something, but did not dare to begin the conversation before his wife had spoken; so he contented himself by

coughing several times in different tones, and taking numerous pinches of snuff.

Breakfast was served. They began by speaking of the rain, of the fine weather, and of the grocery trade, — a subject of conversation in which friend Dupont was very brilliant. He always found a way of returning to pepper and mustard, and with these he spiced all his discourse.

At length Madame Moutonnet, making a sign to her husband to be silent, thus addressed Eugénie: —

"My daughter, you are eighteen years old; your education is finished; you know how to look after the business of a counter; and, thanks to my example, I think you understand housekeeping."

"Yes, certainly," said M. Moutonnet. "She understands that."

"Hush, if you please, Monsieur Moutonnet. I have from the beginning instructed you in those principles of virtue and wisdom which — "

"Madame," said Bidois, entering hastily, "I don't find M. Dupuis' account to be correct."

"Very good; that's all right, Bidois. We are busy now; I will see about that later."

Bidois left regretfully; but he had taken time to notice the face of everyone present, which was something gained; he drew his own conclusions.

Madame Moutonnet went on with her little speech. "Indeed, my daughter, thanks to my

care, I believe that you are in a condition to be married, and that you will be worthy of your mother."

"Yes, my love; she will be worthy of you," said M. Moutonnet. "I can assure you of that."

"Will you keep still, Monsieur Moutonnet? Will you let me speak? I have never seen you so loquacious. Perhaps, my daughter, you have not yet thought of marrying; and, as you are very young, you need not have thought of it for several years, if a brilliant and substantial marriage had not been offered you."

Dupont saw that he was about to be spoken of, so he swaggered, moved upon his chair, rolled his eyes to be agreeable, and in order to appear careless played with his two chains, one in each hand.

"Yes, my daughter, a brilliant marriage is offered you. The person who seeks the right to your affection, in every respect" (here Dupont rose, and bowed to Madame Moutonnet) "is a man who unites with a very attractive exterior" (Dupont arose and bowed again) "the essential qualities which cannot fail to make a woman happy." Dupont arose and bowed anew. "He is a man of mature age, who will be anxious for your happiness, who will love you tenderly, who is rich, — very rich, — and, moreover, economical, and who is an excellent business man."

During this discourse Dupont was constantly

rising and sitting down. "He is a man, indeed, in whom I do not recognize a single fault." Here Dupont reseated himself so precipitately that he rolled with his chair into the middle of the dining-room. Bidois, who had heard the noise, rushed in, pretending to believe that someone had called him. He assisted the grocer to arise, while the future son-in-law, in order to avoid new misfortunes, decided to listen standing to the remainder of Madame Moutonnet's lecture.

"I think you can hardly fail to recognize the portrait I have drawn for you, my daughter," Madame Moutonnet went on, "as that of M. Dupont, our sincere friend. You are not deceived; it is he who asks your hand; it is to him we shall give you in marriage."

Eugénie did not respond. The shock deprived her of the power of speech; and, besides, what could she say? The poor girl knew that when her mother had pronounced her decision she was expected only to obey; but could she obey, when she was ordered to marry Dupont, to love him, and, consequently, to forget Adolphe? Ah, that was impossible; and Eugénie, who in that instant comprehended the full extent of her misfortune, without perceiving a ray of hope, felt her blood turned to ice; an enormous weight was placed upon her breast; she was oppressed, suffocated; she could not weep; and when M. Dupont advanced to address her, she turned alternately red

and pale, and fainted away before he had begun his first phrase.

"Oh, my goodness!" cried the grocer, supporting Eugénie; "she is ill."

"She is ill!" said Papa Moutonnet, running to his daughter and slapping her hands to restore the circulation. "Wife, wife, look! she is dying! What must we do? Bidois! Jeanneton!"

Madame Moutonnet, who was never excited, approached her daughter, pushing her husband bruskly aside. "It is nothing,—it is nothing," she said. "It is often so when one speaks to a young girl of her marriage; you can understand that emotion—"

"Yes, yes; it is undoubtedly joy," said Dupont. "The poor little thing has been overcome. We should have prepared her for this."

"Oh, don't be anxious; it will be nothing."

"It is a joy that will result very sadly for him," said Bidois, who stood at the entrance to the dining-room; while Jeanneton, who had hastened to care for her dear child, held Eugénie and made her sniff the salts.

"It seems to me, my dear, that you were not so ill when I proposed to you," said M. Moutonnet.

"Why, of course not, monsieur; that is very different. I always had character, and strength of mind. Eugénie is as weak as you are; besides, young ladies nowadays have nervous attacks, and in my time we knew nothing of such things."

"For my part, I prefer a woman to be nervous," said Dupont; "it indicates an impressionability which — in fact, I have some orange-flower water of the very first quality, from Grasse, and I will make her take it every day. But there! I believe she is recovering. Her color is coming back. Let us see whom she looks at first."

But Eugénie's first glance was for Jeanneton, who understood all that it meant. The young girl lowered her eyes immediately, for she dreaded equally the glances of her mother and of her future husband.

"I see, my daughter," said Madame Moutonnet, "that this has been too much for you; it is very natural that the announcement of your marriage and the idea of leaving your parents should produce this effect. Go back to your room until dinner-time, take a little nap, and that will make you feel better. I told you I would excuse you from the shop today. Go, my daughter; you understand our intentions; we will speak to you later in regard to details. Monsieur Dupont, give your hand to your betrothed — "

Dupont took Eugénie's hand and let it rest in his without saying a word. Papa Moutonnet kissed his daughter; he did not see the tears that filled her beautiful eyes; but his wife had said that was natural, and after that M. Moutonnet was convinced that his daughter was enchanted with the idea of marrying.

"I told you the other day," he said, "that you were all ready to keep house for someone. Oh, yes," he added, shaking his head, "I know how these young girls are when they get to be eighteen."

A look from Madame Moutonnet cut short the lace dealer's phrase, and the grocer led Eugénie from the room. The poor child did not once lift her eyes to the young man's face; when they reached the door of her room and she was about to leave, M. Dupont, thinking this a favorable opportunity to say something tender to his future wife, retained her hand and, bowing profoundly, began his compliments.

"Mademoiselle, it makes me very happy — in knowing that I am to be your husband. — Your beautiful eyes — your emotion — I feel very much gratified — I am sure this testimony of your feelings is reciprocated. — If — if you will allow me, this evening I will send you a half-bottle of nut essence; it is excellent for the stomach. I've also some chocolate health pastilles with vanilla; they are very agreeable to the taste and — "

"Thank you, monsieur," said Eugénie, bowing very coldly to the grocer; "but I never take any of these things." She closed the door instantly in Dupont's face, who stood for some moments upon the landing fixed in admiration before the barrier.

"Heavens!" he said at last; "I declare I have

never seen a young lady so perfectly brought up; and such self-control! Goodness, what an education! what a manner! and how she — and love — as to love, she must be very deeply in love with me to faint away as she did. I am sure I am excessively flattered."

Friend Dupont returned to the shop, where he found papa and mamma. They thought from the joyous air of their future son-in-law that their daughter must have said something very sweet to him. Bidois gave him a sidelong glance and laughed to himself.

"Well, son-in-law," said M. Moutonnet, "you look very happy. Eugénie must have received you pleasantly."

"Yes, father; yes, I am satisfied. Your daughter did not say anything; that is all right, though; I understand her perfectly. She is adorable; you have given me a treasure."

"Indeed," said Madame Moutonnet, "I don't think my daughter would ever resist my will; when I say to her, 'There is your husband,' she must obey and be silent. That is the way I was brought up. When my husband, M. Moutonnet, was presented to me I did not love him in the least; I confess, indeed, that I thought he was ugly."

"What, my heart! did you think that of me?"

"Yes, monsieur; in those days you wore a coat which was dreadfully unbecoming; but that did not stop me. I said to myself, 'When he is my

husband he will wear what I wish.' You see, monsieur, I married you; and, God be thanked, I have never had cause to repent it."

"No, surely, my love; I hope not."

"My daughter will do as I have done, my dear Dupont, and you will assure me of it in the future."

While the parents and the future husband discussed the necessary details in regard to the approaching marriage, Eugénie sat alone in her room, a prey to very bitter thoughts. On leaving M. Dupont she had thrown herself upon a chair. Tears at last gushed forth. Eugénie sobbed. The sight of the young girl giving way to her sorrow was so touching, so sad, that perhaps if Madame Moutonnet had seen it, even her tenderness would have been aroused; but Eugénie dared not weep before her mother.

She sat for two hours in her room almost motionless. Her tears fell; she scarcely thought to wipe them away; she abandoned herself to that silent, hopeless sorrow a hundred times more cruel than wild bursts of despair. Silent suffering denotes that the soul is desperately wounded, and is much more difficult to heal than pain which is violently expressed.

Eugénie passed the day in this condition. For her there seemed to be no consciousness of time. If you forbid a young girl to love, you deprive existence of all charm for her. Of course she was

not entirely forbidden to love, but she was commanded to love M. Dupont, and for Eugénie that was not possible; there was absolutely no affinity between herself and the grocer; and how can love be born where sympathy does not exist?

A light tap at the door made the poor child tremble. She awakened as if from a dream. "Who is that?" she asked. "It is I, mamzelle," said a voice which the young girl recognized immediately. She ran to open the door. Jeanneton entered, and Eugénie threw herself into her arms. "Oh, dear friend!" she cried, and she had not strength to say another word. Her tears suffocated her.

"There! there!" said Jeanneton; "you must not be so broken-hearted as that, so desperate; you will make yourself ill. Come! come! don't cry, mamzelle; don't cry any more." While she said this Jeanneton mingled her tears with those of Eugénie, and wept while she tried to comfort.

"They want to marry me, Jeanneton."

"Yes, yes; I have been afraid of that for a long time."

"And you didn't tell me?"

"What's the use of troubling yourself before you have to?"

"They want me to marry M. Dupont."

"That's a pretty fellow! He's as awkward as the handle of my stove."

"I can never love him, — never."

"I believe that. He's too homely, too stupid, and too old for you. How could such a husband suit you?"

"Oh, no, no; he doesn't suit me at all; and, besides, I should have to forget Adolphe. Ah, you know that that would be impossible. I love Adolphe, and he adores me."

"Oh, yes; he's very nice. It would be much better for you if he had some money."

"Oh, Jeanneton! why do people marry for money?"

"Because — why — why, because we eat all our lives, and we only make love while we are young."

"Oh, I shall love Adolphe all my life; I shall die if they marry me to another."

"But why do you despair so soon? You aren't going to marry Dupont tomorrow, and perhaps your mother —"

"Oh, she wishes this marriage; you know well she will never change her mind."

"But how can you tell? If you weep — if you speak to her — oh, goodness! how can she resist you?"

"Oh, Jeanneton, I never should dare tell her that I love Adolphe."

"You won't tell her that you love Adolphe; but you can say that you detest Dupont."

"She will not listen to me."

"If you spoke to your father?"

"You know very well that is useless."

"Oh, that's true; he will promise to speak for you, and he'll say nothing."

"You can see, Jeanneton, that there is nothing left but to die."

"Ah, no, no, mamzelle; I don't see that. It's always foolish to die. It would be much better to live and marry the grocer. Courage! we shall see. No one knows what may happen.—But I must go back immediately to my kitchen. I came away secretly, because I suspected that you were crying; but now we shall see each other this evening, and we will talk more at our ease."

"Oh, yes, my dear; but what about him? I shall not see him today, and what will he think?"

"You'll see him tomorrow, and if by chance I meet him I'll tell him what has happened."

"Ah, my dear Jeanneton, how good you are! Oh, please try to see him."

"Yes, yes."

Jeanneton went away, leaving Eugénie almost calm; it requires so little to resuscitate hope when one is only eighteen. At thirty one is not so easily consoled, many of one's illusions have already vanished, and when experience arrives happiness is apt to take its flight.

During the day Jeanneton was unable to see Adolphe, for she was very busy, because people were coming to dinner; it was, in fact, the betrothal repast, to which the Gérard family and the

future son-in-law had been invited. The stout girl did not mention this fact to Eugénie, thinking it would add to her sorrow, but returned to her kitchen, where preparations were making for the dinner, which she cooked with a sad heart, for she knew her dear girl would not touch it. As a rule shopkeepers dine late, for they have more leisure after the busy time for sales is past. Monsieur and Madame Gérard, their sister Cécile, and little Fanfan came at half past five; they were in full dress, and they had that air of satisfaction and content which is fitting when participating in the wedding or betrothal festivities of someone else.

It is not that people are interested in the happiness of the engaged couple, but they go to a wedding as they would amuse themselves at the theatre; very fortunate are the married couples who escape the criticism of those who have been invited to share their happiness.

The Gérards had not been told the great news; but some words dropped here and there, the assiduity of Dupont in the house of the lace dealer, and, at last, this dinner, which was not on a holiday, — all led the family of the perfumer to suspect that the repast was not given without especial design.

While the first compliments were exchanged, and Bidois took snuff because M. Gérard's odors gave him a bad headache, Dupont arrived. His

pockets were stuffed with olives, with nuts and raisins, and with preserves; and he held a bottle of fine wine under each arm. This confirmed the Gérards' suspicions, who smiled significantly as if to say, "We have divined the truth."

"Yes, yes," whispered Mademoiselle Cécile to her sister in a low tone; "they are going to marry the little one to Dupont. That is singular after what I noticed on the day of the feast of Saint Eustache; I should have thought otherwise, but we shall see."

The spinster said no more, but she promised herself to find out whether her suspicions were correct. In spite of her pretended disgust for men, Mademoiselle Cécile had glanced quite warmly at M. Dupont, who was a good catch; but the grocer did not respond to the invitations of the spinster, and, although she had no hope left of securing M. Dupont for herself, she was not ill pleased at the idea of breaking up his marriage with Eugénie. That would be a sweet vengeance.

"But where is Eugénie, the dear child?" demanded everybody.

"I'll go and get her," said Madame Moutonnet. "She is in her room; she had something like a nervous attack this morning, but I'll bring her down."

"Yes," said Bidois under his breath, "I wager her eyes will be as red as a rabbit's. No doubt they'll say that's from joy."

Madame Moutonnet entered her daughter's room; she found her seated sorrowfully near a window which, unhappily, only looked into the court.

"What are you doing now, mademoiselle?" said Madame Moutonnet in a severe tone. She noticed immediately that her daughter looked very melancholy and that her eyes were red with tears.

"I'm not doing anything, mamma."

"And didn't you know it was dinner time?"

"I'm not hungry, mamma."

"Hungry or not, we always dine; but anyone would think, mademoiselle, that you had been crying."

Eugénie made no response, but she turned her supplicating eyes to her mother and they were still full of tears.

"What does this mean, mademoiselle? Why are you making all this tragedy? Are you breaking your heart because we want to marry you? That would be too much. When I select an excellent husband for you, one who is easily managed, you ought to thank me and be full of joy. You reward me well for occupying myself with your happiness!"

Eugénie struggled to speak, and said in a feeble voice, "Mamma, I don't love M. Dupont."

"You're a fool. Do you expect to love your intended husband?"

"But, mamma—"

"But, but, mademoiselle! Have you nothing to say except 'but'?"

"I don't want to — to — to marry him."

"You don't want to! Is this my daughter who is speaking to me? When I have resolved upon a thing, do you venture to make criticisms? I believe you would like to argue as your father does. Let me hear no more such talk. Dupont is rich; he is only forty years old; he is the best match that you can find; therefore, today is your betrothal. The wedding will take place in a month; it is all settled, so let me see no longer this melancholy air, which displeases me. Come, mademoiselle, follow me; we have company to dinner; remember to appear with the decent and satisfied manner of a young person who knows that she is about to be settled in life."

Eugénie repressed her tears and followed her mother in silence. She felt that it was in vain for her to try to soften Madame Moutonnet; but Jeanneton had promised her to speak to Adolphe, and certainly Adolphe would not allow her to become the wife of another.

Reflecting thus, Eugénie endeavored to calm her sorrow and restrain her tears, but despite all her efforts she could not succeed in appearing cheerful; and when she entered the room where everyone was sitting, Mademoiselle Cécile felt confirmed in her suspicions.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Madame Mou-

tonnet, taking her daughter's hand and pressing it significantly as she added, "I present to you my daughter and her future husband, M. Jonas Dupont."

Following her mother's instructions, Eugénie made a deep courtesy to the company, who replied with the usual compliments, which Dupont received with an enchanted air. Mademoiselle Cécile tried to disguise with smiles the annoyance which was evident in her face when the grocer's marriage was announced.

"It's a delightful marriage," said M. Gérard. At the moment he saw only the pleasure of being invited to the wedding. "It's like the marriage of Flora and Mars, or Hebe and Ganymede."

"What!" said M. Dupont; "is Ganymede the patron saint of grocers?"

"No, indeed; Ganymede is the cupbearer of the gods."

"Well, in that case, there is not much difference, because I sell things both to eat and to drink."

On seating themselves at table, Eugénie found herself placed beside her future husband, and opposite her mother, who had so placed herself that she might warn her daughter as to the proper things to say or do. Madame Moutonnet, however, troubled herself needlessly. Eugénie's eyes were constantly dropped, and she saw none of the elder lady's signs, who soon devised another

means of attracting her attention. The table was long, but it was not very wide, and people near the middle could easily reach the feet of those on the opposite side. Madame Moutonnet, therefore, decided to stretch under the table and make her legs talk.

M. Gérard sat on the other side of Eugénie, and he did his best to say pleasant things, which should be more interesting than the pepper-and-mustard talk that Eugénie always heard from her future spouse.

M. Moutonnet essayed some rather broad pleasantries on the subject of matrimony; but each time he began a phrase Madame Moutonnet bestowed upon him a glance which made his words expire in his plate. Madame Gérard talked of the bride's toilet, and little Fanfan of the garter he should carry home, as the youngest bachelor at the wedding. Bidois ate, drank, and listened in silence. Mademoiselle Cécile spoke little, but a mocking smile played about her lips when by chance she glanced at Dupont.

"But the bride is very silent," said Madame Gérard.

"My daughter knows what is proper. A young person who is to be married shouldn't laugh and sing like a little fool on that account."

"Oh, it is easy to perceive that mademoiselle wishes to laugh and sing," said Mademoiselle Cécile, compressing her lips.

"However," continued Madame Moutonnet, "since she's to be advanced to the dignity of a married woman, I allow her to take part in the conversation."

While she spoke, Madame Moutonnet kept her eyes and her feet going; but Eugénie did not lift her eyes, and her feet were tucked under her chair, so that she did not feel the little kicks which her mother constantly attempted to bestow upon her.

"Oh," said mademoiselle under her breath, "I shall find a way presently to force her to pay attention to us."

Bidois, engaged in picking a piece of the back, the only portion which fell to his share when they ate chicken, and which he always accepted with the air of receiving a favor, while grumbling to himself that no one ever gave him anything but bones — Bidois, who noticed everything, said to himself, as he regarded Eugénie, —

"If she looks like that on the wedding-day, it can't fail to be a joyful occasion."

On the arrival of the dessert, Eugénie was still silent and sad. Madame Moutonnet renewed her signalling under the table, and thought she was touching her daughter's feet, while, in reality, she pressed those of M. Gérard and Dupont.

The perfumer had a good opinion of himself, and he thought he understood; he supposed that Eugénie, not daring to make an open response

to his gallantries, gave a tender little declaration under the table. He sighed, and risked some passionate glances and a few words under his breath, as to the pleasure he experienced; but Eugénie did not see M. Gérard's airs, and did not hear his stifled sighs. Her heart and her spirit were far away.

Dupont did not at first know what to make of it. He felt someone step upon his foot; he drew up his face and almost screamed, because a very tender spot had been touched, which caused him extreme pain. It occurred to him, however, that his sweetheart was showing him a delicate little attention, and he repressed the expression of pain. He tried, on the contrary, to appear enchanted, and thanked Eugénie in a low tone, telling her that he appreciated this proof of her love.

Eugénie looked at him with astonishment, and said nothing; but Dupont seemed delighted, which gave Madame Moutonnet the impression that her conversation under the table had been effective, and that her daughter had said something pleasant to her future spouse. After this she was encouraged to ply her feet, and the perfumer and the grocer continued to put on airs and heave sentimental sighs.

This little pantomime was not enough for Mademoiselle Cécile, who wished by a bold stroke to discover the truth in regard to her suspicions. She led the conversation to the subject of matri-

mony, and spoke of several persons of her acquaintance who were about to marry; then, pretending to speak of an indifferent matter, —

"There is another," she said, looking attentively at Eugénie; "this young man who was at your fête, you know, Monsieur Moutonnet, in the wood at Romainville."

"Yes, yes, — M. Adolphe, our neighbor," replied the lace dealer; while Eugénie, on hearing the name of Adolphe, felt the blood flow to her heart, and, as if awakening from a dream, fixed her eyes upon Mademoiselle Cécile.

"Yes, M. Adolphe is going to be married."

"To be married!" cried Eugénie, in a trembling voice, whose accents betrayed what was passing in her soul; while Madame Moutonnet, much astonished at her daughter's conduct, set her feet going with more force than ever; and this time struck Dupont so hard that he could not suppress a cry of pain.

"What, mademoiselle! are you quite sure?" murmured Eugénie, who had forgotten her mother and had only one thought.

"Oh, yes; it is true; I have it from good authority," replied Mademoiselle Cécile maliciously. "I know the mother of the young lady he is going to marry."

Poor Eugénie did not hear any more. Adolphe was inconstant; Adolphe was to marry another. This was too much to bear; she could not endure

it; she felt herself dying, and fell toward Gérard, who fortunately received her in his arms.

Everyone arose and surrounded Eugénie.

"That's very singular," said Mademoiselle Cécile, charmed at the success of her ruse; for we can easily imagine that there was not a word of truth in what she had said about Adolphe. "What can have made her faint? I only spoke, I believe, of M. Adolphe and his marriage."

"Oh, mademoiselle, there is no question of M. Adolphe," said Madame Moutonnet with decision.

"It is the heat," said the grocer, although it was now the middle of December, and there was never enough fire at M. Moutonnet's house.

"I should say it was the cold," remarked Bidois, under his breath.

"It is her digestion," said M. Moutonnet.

"But she has eaten nothing," replied Mademoiselle Cécile.

"It is the emotion natural to a young girl when she learns she is to be married," said Madame Moutonnet.

"But has she not known it since this morning?" said Madame Gérard.

"Well, madame, she might have known it a week; I fainted seven times on my wedding-day."

"You, my heart?" cried M. Moutonnet, who did not recall this circumstance; but a severe look from his wife silenced him immediately.

"I repeat, it will be nothing," said M. Gérard. He was convinced that Eugénie had fainted in order to have the pleasure of falling into his arms; while Dupont ran about the room, poured water upon his future wife, made her sniff wine instead of vinegar, and rubbed her temples with crême de moka; but all these efforts were in vain. They could not restore the interesting invalid, and Madame Moutonnet decided it would be wiser to carry Eugénie to her room and send M. Bidois for a doctor.

This event destroyed the pleasure of the evening. The Gérard family said their farewells, expressing the interest they felt in Eugénie. Dupont himself withdrew, but asked permission to return early the next day, to inquire for news of his intended; and M. Bidois went for the doctor. So ended the day of betrothal.

CHAPTER VII

The Sorrows of Love. Adolphe's Neighbor

While all these momentous scenes were transpiring in the lace-dealer's comfortable abode, quite other events were taking place in the street and in the novelty shop where our friend Adolphe was employed.

During the whole of the morning Eugénie's lover had been pacing up and down the short space of street which separated his place of business from M. Moutonnet's house. He had, however, failed in the object of this promenading, for he had not once seen the object of his adoration. At first he had decided that she must be employed by her mother in the back part of the shop, and each time that he so vainly passed before this dwelling which contained the girl for whom he had formed so ardent an attachment, and regretfully returned to his shop and his stool, our young man consoled himself with the hope that on the next occasion he would be more fortunate. A quarter of an hour afterward he went by again, with the same result as before; he could catch not even the most transitory glimpse of Eugénie. The day rolled by in this way. In the even-

ing his beloved friend did not appear upon the threshold of the door, and he was obliged to leave without seeing her.

The next day Adolphe could not remain in his place. He seemed to burn upon his chair. He began his journeyings as before, but his employer stopped him.

"Where are you going, monsieur?" he said to him.

"I am going — I shall return, monsieur," stammered our lover, not knowing exactly what to reply.

"Monsieur, do you intend to conduct yourself today as you did yesterday? You spent your time running up and down the street. I do not know what for. You appeared like a crazy man; you did not stay at your work five minutes. It is impossible for you to remain with me if you continue like that, for sometimes you make mistake after mistake. If people ask for muslin, you show them calico; if they want to look at fichus, you bring out handkerchiefs; if you are asked for two yards of material, you cut off four; in fact, monsieur, you do everything wrong. You are never here when you are needed; you must alter your conduct or leave my employ."

"Just as you please, monsieur," responded Adolphe, enchanted to think that he would be able to spend the whole day in the street, with no one to ask him why; and, without waiting, with-

out reflection, our heedless fellow mounted to his little chamber, made a parcel of his effects and went back to the shop, the proprietor of which hastened to pay him, delighted to get rid of a clerk who seemed to have lost his head.

Adolphe was now without a place; but, instead of feeling distressed, he was rejoiced at this event, because it left him free to do picket duty before the shop of his sweetheart, to spend the entire day there if it pleased him, and, if he wished, to wait until she showed herself. Everything yields to a lover's desire to see his mistress. He does not think of the future; the present is all-absorbing. Adolphe had put his money into the care of the portress of the house where he had a room. Nothing troubled him; for he had three hundred and twenty francs in his pocket, the result of his savings, combined with the wages he had just received. At twenty years can one feel anxious with such a sum in hand, especially if one does not breakfast at the Café Anglais, or dine at the establishment of Véry?

Adolphe walked about during part of the day before the house of M. Moutonnet. Toward three o'clock, his stomach, empty, and faint from continual walking, reminded him by its clamorous monitions that one cannot live upon love and hope alone. Adolphe entered M. Pétrin's shop, which was but a few steps from that of the lace dealer, and bought a roll, with which he returned

to his post. While he swallowed his dinner he did not remove his eyes from the front of the shop, where he expected that Eugénie would appear; and, as she did not come, the poor boy sighed at each mouthful he swallowed, which did not prevent him from eating, however, because a stomach of twenty years easily digests the sorrows of life and a penny roll.

But night came without restoring Eugénie to her usual post.

"Oh, it is too much!" said our lover, who, for a quarter of an hour, had been walking in a gutter without being conscious of it. "Something has happened to her. This absence is not natural. Two days, and she has not been out! Perhaps she is ill, or could they have shut her up in her room? Have they discovered our love? No matter what happens, I cannot remain in this uncertainty. The old clerk is alone in the shop; I will enter, and try to get some news from him."

Adolphe rushed forward; he arrived at the shop door; he trembled; at last he touched the button, and found himself before M. Bidois, who lifted his head without disturbing himself, and recognized Adolphe.

"Good evening, monsieur," said our young lover, looking sorrowfully about him.

"Good evening, monsieur. — Five and five make ten, and nine make nineteen."

"How are you, Monsieur Bidois?"

"Oh, I am pretty well, monsieur, thank Heaven. — We say nineteen and forty are fifty-nine."

"You are always working, Monsieur Bidois. You are a model clerk."

"Monsieur, I attend to my business; it is my duty.— I carry seven and put down six."

"And how are Madame Moutonnet and her husband?"

"They are well, monsieur. — I set down six."

"And their daughter, Mademoiselle Eugénie? I have not seen her in the shop today or yesterday."

"It is because she is in her room.— Twelve dozen green fringes."

"Oh, she is in her room. Why is that?"

"Because she is ill. — We say a hundred and thirty-two francs, seventy-five."

"She is ill, — Mademoiselle Eugénie is ill? O my God! and what is the matter with her? How long has she been ill?"

"Take care, monsieur. What the devil do you mean? You will turn over my cashbook; you have almost turned over my desk."

"Pardon me, Monsieur Bidois; pardon me! In mercy answer me!"

"It seems to me that is what I have been doing ever since you came in."

"But, tell me, is her illness dangerous? Does she suffer? Are they anxious about her?"

"I — I — put down zero, and I carry eight. —

No, monsieur, no. I don't think she is dangerously ill. — Total, eleven hundred thirty-six and fifty."

"But what is she ill of?"

"The devil! that isn't according to my account. I have made an error of ten francs."

"You will find it another time, Monsieur Bidois. Her illness — I beg you to tell me."

"I shall find it another time! Peste! you are reassuring. I must find it immediately, monsieur."

"Please — her illness?"

"That comes, perhaps, from the dozen green fringes."

"You are killing me, Monsieur Bidois."

"But ten francs is not a bagatelle."

"I will give them to you if you will not look any farther; but answer me."

"Monsieur, for whom do you take me, if you please? Offer me money to induce me to falsify my accounts! That is something new."

"Eh, monsieur, I know that you are a man of honor, — the most honest of clerks; but labor does not exclude humanity, and it is in the name of all you hold most dear that I beg you to answer me."

"What I hold most dear now is to find my mistake."

"How unfortunate I am!"

"Ah, I have it; there it is. It is this three, which I took for a two."

"Well, you have finished, and you will talk to me?"

"In a moment.—They give us very bad feathers.—Mademoiselle Eugénie is ill of joy, as they say."

"Of joy? O God! and what causes her joy?"

"Because she is going to be married."

"To be married,—to be married? Eugénie? With whom? When?"

"Oh, don't shake like that, monsieur; I have made a great blot."

"Oh, Monsieur Bidois, pardon me; but with whom?"

"With M. Dupont, the grocer, of the Rue aux Ours."

"With M. Dupont? Eugénie?"

"Monsieur! monsieur! you choke me. Let me go, I say."

"And you dare to tell me she is going to be married?"

"Monsieur, if you don't let me go I will call the guard; you will tear the collar of my coat."

"No; it is not possible. You are fooling me; you are tormenting me. Oh!"

In his despair Adolphe had seized Bidois by the collar and shook him so savagely that the old clerk was afraid he would lose his wig. Suddenly the entrance of Madame Moutonnet changed the scene entirely.

Bidois' cries had been heard in the shop, where

Madame Moutonnet was with her husband. She glanced through the screen and, recognizing the young man, ordered her husband to remain in the shop. She descended, and advanced with a firm step toward Adolphe, who at sight of her remained immovable, still holding the collar of Bidois' coat.

"What is the meaning of this noise?" said Madame Moutonnet, in a tone which upset poor Adolphe completely.

Bidois freed his collar, and straightened his wig with considerable ill-humor. "Madame," he said, "this young man has gone crazy because I told him Mademoiselle Eugénie is to marry M. Dupont."

"And what does it matter to you, monsieur, with whom or when I marry my daughter? Why should you meddle with it? How do you dare to criticise what I do? Monsieur, I believed you honest and respectable, but I see that I was deceived in you. I forbid you in future to step inside my door."

"But, madame, I don't see why."

"You don't see why! Well, you ought to understand me very well; your conduct this evening justifies my suspicions of you."

"Well, madame, I don't wish to conceal the fact that I love, I adore, your daughter. I can no longer live without her. I shall die if you marry her to another."

"Whether you live or die is no affair of mine; but I consider you very impertinent to dare to love my daughter; you are still more impertinent to think that I should send away an excellent husband, a man with an establishment, for a little clerk with an income of six hundred francs. To think that, because I invited a young man to a picnic, he should bring disorder into my family! Leave my house, monsieur, and don't come here again! You understand me, Bidois; if this gentleman presents himself in my absence, I authorize you to chase him out."

Bidois made no response. Such a commission was not at all agreeable to him; after the muscular fashion in which Adolphe had shaken him, he had no desire to come to a conflict with him. He contented himself by lifting his eyes as a signal, which the young man did not observe.

"You will have no more difficulty, madame," responded Adolphe proudly. Her words had restored his courage and his energy. "I know what I shall do; some day perhaps you will repent your severity."

Saying these words, the young man left the shop and slammed the door, so that all the glasses jingled.

"Could you imagine such audacity?" exclaimed Madame Moutonnet, glancing at her clerk.

"I believe he has broken a pane," said Bidois, examining the windows.

"He dares to love my daughter!"

"Oh, I've suspected that for a long time."

"What, Bidois! and you said nothing to me?"

"Oh, if I express my opinion, I am called an imbecile, and an old twaddler."

"I confess I have used those words sometimes. But really, Bidois, what have you noticed?"

"Oh, for a month or more this young man has passed and repassed before the door twenty times a day."

"You don't say so. And has my daughter noticed it?"

"If I saw it, surely she must have observed it."

"What you say is very judicious, my dear Bidois; besides, the more I compare the circumstances — My daughter dares to tell me that she does not love M. Dupont, an excellent man!"

"Yes; he is a fine man."

"It is because she has noticed this little dandy."

"No doubt."

"And these successive fainting fits, which I attributed to nervous excitement, may have had another cause, Bidois."

"I agree with you, madame."

"Instead of marrying her to Dupont in a month, I'll see that the wedding takes place within a fortnight."

"You will do wisely, madame," replied Bidois; for, since Adolphe had strangled him, he felt a strong preference for the grocer.

"My daughter's illness is perhaps only a stratagem, practised in the hope of softening me; but I know how to make myself obeyed."

"That is right, and once they are married we shall be tranquil. You remember the thieves of Saint Eustache? Do you still think I was dreaming?"

"What, Bidois! Would this little scoundrel have the audacity to introduce himself into my house?"

"All that I can tell you is that someone went up the stairway."

"Ah, what perversity! If I believed that my daughter knew of it, I do not know what I should do to her; but I prefer to think that she is ignorant of the impertinence of this little Adolphe Dalmont, and that she will obey me without further demur. Ah, Bidois, how much character it requires to manage a house and a family, when one has a husband as insignificant as mine!"

Thus saying, Madame Moutonnet mounted to her daughter's chamber, — for Eugénie, since the betrothal dinner, had not been able to leave her bed, — and told her that instead of marrying M. Dupont in a month, the wedding would take place in a fortnight.

Eugénie, astonished, lifted her head, and turned her despairing eyes upon her mother, whose severity of expression was so alarming that she dared not ask a question.

"There is no hope!" exclaimed the young girl when her mother had left her. "I must give up Adolphe. Oh, if I could only die!"

Poor Adolphe had left the shop a little while before, saying the same words.

The anguish of the two lovers was doubled by their doubt of each other. "He is going to marry someone else," said Eugénie to herself, as she thought of Adolphe. "He does not love me; he deceived me when he declared that he only thought of me."

"She is ill of joy," murmured our lovesick swain, "at the idea of marrying that Dupont. She doesn't love me, or she loves me very little."

But reflection brought hope. "It is not possible that she loves the grocer," said Adolphe to himself; "old Bidois only wanted to make me miserable. No, Eugénie would not have deceived me. It is much more likely she is ill because they are forcing her to marry — and I am not near her! I may not see her, or speak to her, or console her. But I positively must see her. I will elope with her, and I will marry her in spite of all the world."

"That ill-natured Cécile was probably telling a falsehood," said Eugénie; "Adolphe could not be unfaithful. Besides, if he were going to marry I should know of it from Jeanneton, who hears all the news of the neighborhood. Why should he pass our shop twenty times a day? Why should

he look at me so tenderly, and press my hand, and say loving words? No, Adolphe loves me still, and I daresay at this moment he is in despair because he cannot see me; but tomorrow I hope I shall feel strong enough to go down into the shop, and then I shall see him."

Adolphe could not stay away from his beloved's dwelling, and a few minutes before they closed the shop he saw Jeanneton going out. The young man was by her side instantly, and was asking her a thousand questions before she had time to answer one.

"Yes, monsieur," said Jeanneton, "she is ill of grief, not only because they want her to marry Dupont, but also because someone told her you were going to be married."

"I married! Who said it? Who dared to say it? Ah, Jeanneton, she did not believe that, I hope."

"Monsieur, in love, one believes everything,—evil as well as good; and I have had a great deal of trouble trying to console her."

"O Jeanneton! tell her I only live to love her."

"Yes, yes; don't worry."

"I left my place so that I could be near her as much as possible."

"Well, in my opinion that was a foolish performance."

"Tell her I intend to marry her although her

mother put me out of the house and forbade me to return."

"What! madame did that? Well, it's a fine beginning for your affairs!"

"But I must see her."

"She will come down tomorrow, I think. Till then, be patient, wait before the draper's at dusk, and I will bring you news."

"Tomorrow I will be there, my good Jeanneton."

The servant left him, and he remembered that he had secured no lodging for the night, for the room he had occupied belonged to his late employer. He went back to the portress, obtained his little property, and, following her advice, went to a modest furnished-room house in the neighborhood, and rented a small attic room. He paid a fortnight in advance, and thus was left free to think of nothing but his love.

On the same floor as Adolphe lodged a young woman who was also absorbed in love; but she was not content with thinking, for she believed in a practical employment of her time.

Adolphe threw himself on a sufficiently bad bed, which with a table and some chairs constituted almost the entire furniture of his new habitation. He sought to forget his troubles in sleep, and, soothed by the image of Eugénie, he had almost lost consciousness, when a violent noise awakened him. His neighbor had returned. She was not

alone, and they talked so loudly that Adolphe could not avoid hearing the conversation which followed.

"I'm fearfully hungry; have you anything to eat, sweetheart?"

"There's a pot of preserves and some Italian cheese left from my breakfast."

"That will have to do. If I were in funds I would go and get a roast chicken; but that's an impossibility, physically and morally."

"You never have a sou."

"Never a sou! You did not say that the day I took you in a tilbury to dine with me at Montmorency."

"That's the only time you have spent any money on me in the six weeks I have known you."

"I can't spend it when I don't have it."

"You should be rolling in gold. When one has undertaken the management of a theatre of the importance of yours, one ought to make money easily."

"You think so, Zélie; you believe it is all profit, but there are tremendous expenses. Applause is not everything. Have I not my troupe to pay — and the bowls of punch, the beer, the spirits, and liqueurs? The deuce! I employ people who demand a certain treatment."

"I assert that you have a splendid place, and that your colleagues are buying houses."

"Patience. Listen. I am only beginning. That will all come, but I have been unfortunate for some time. Three pieces in succession have not done well."

"Because you did not know how to support them."

"Be quiet now; I had them very well supported. We had two black eyes, without counting the fist fights and other attractions; but it must be confessed the result was not very good. Fortunately, I am putting on a pantomime; we shall get a little rest with that."

"I hope, meanwhile, that you will look out for me."

"Do you need to remind me of that? Ah, you danced beautifully this evening."

"Really?"

"Yes; you made some superb kicks. It is only in the steps that you are not quite certain."

"What was that author saying to you in the wings?"

"He spoke of the weak points in his new play, so that I might have them applauded more strongly than the others. He reminded me of his call before the curtain and his conclusion. One needs an inexhaustible memory to retain all these points. Ah, say now, that little actor who appears as bear in the new melodrama, and who promised me a full house if I would applaud his entrance, is stupid. Still, if the bear had a fine

rôle that would be all right; but he merely passes across the stage."

"Ah, but you must not forget to have the little débutante hissed in the new ballet; she might interfere with me. We must disgust her with dancing."

"Don't worry; I will manage a little reception for her, and I will take pains to applaud her in the wrong place, in order to put the audience in a bad humor."

"You are charming. Let us have supper. What! you have eaten everything up?"

"Parbleu! that was not difficult. An eighth of a pound of cheese, and the bottom was visible in your pot of preserves."

"But what shall I have?"

"Never mind, Zélie; believe me, you will dance much better tomorrow if you eat no supper."

"Well, is that so? I must fast for a whole year in order to dance better on Saint Sylvester's day! You are a fine fellow!"

"You are as pretty as an angel this evening."

"And he has drunk all the wine, too!"

"It was sour; on my honor, it would have made you ill. What eyes you have! and the figure of a goddess! I shall not be content until I see you as Venus at the Grand Opera."

"I would rather see myself at the table."

"But are you really hungry?"

"Why, of course."

"I adore you this evening; you shall appear at the Opera. I assure you of it."

"It is to be hoped that I shall have some supper then."

"You think only of eating. When I am with you, sweetheart, I think only of love."

"Yes, when your stomach is already full. Leave me; I am in a bad humor."

"It is a storm which a kiss will drive away."

The sound of kisses apprised Adolphe of the end of the conversation. He went to sleep thinking, "How happy they are! They love each other, and they can prove it."

But at six o'clock he was wakened again by the noise in his neighbor's room.

"Those people must love each other excessively!" said Adolphe, supposing the conversation would be a continuation of the same subject. He was quickly undeceived by the sound of several blows, followed by cries and oaths.

"Monster! scoundrel!" cried the dancer, in a voice which did not resemble in the least that of the previous evening. "I've caught you! So you were going to run off before I was up, with my watch and my gold chain!"

"Be quiet, you naughty kicker, or I'll throw this water in your face!"

"Brigand! scoundrel!—a man for whom I have done everything; who would steal from me in order to eat up my property as well as that of others!"

"Your property? That's fine. As to the watch, it belongs as much to me as to you. Was it not through me that you procured the acquaintance of the gentleman who gave it to you? And it was I who pushed you at the theatre; if it were not for me you would still be in the chorus. If you are now doing rôles, you owe it to me. But you are ungrateful, and I'll have no more to do with you. Miss your steps, omit a caper, and you will see how it will go."

"Abandon me, if you please, but leave me my watch and my chain."

"There, Zélie, be quiet, or beware of the clappers; you know that is my strong point."

"Don't come a step, or I will throw this bottle at your head."

The cries redoubled. Adolphe heard the breaking of crockery and furniture, and was on the point of rising to give the alarm.

"They are queer lovers," said Adolphe, rubbing his eyes. "They loved each other last night, and this morning they are fighting. And I envied their happiness!"

Presently the lover left. He ran down the stairs, four steps at a time, paying no attention to the cries, shrieks and groans of Zélie, who followed him to the landing, and would have followed him still farther, if her costume had permitted.

"The wretch!" cried Zélie. "He has taken

it! If he had only left the chain! If I had dared to cry thief, but he would have killed me. I adored that man! — Oh, I should like to get him hung. — But it's my own fault; I should have been on my guard, for he had already stolen my silk shawl, and I was stupid enough to forgive him because he said it was to help his father, who is in Bicêtre. That is what comes of being too good. It is ended. I will have no more weakness; it is nonsense."

"Well, now let us hope it will be quiet; I shall try to go to sleep," said Adolphe. "It's only seven o'clock; Eugénie won't be down early. I'm better in bed than on the street."

Our young lover turned over in search of sleep; but his bed, being no longer new, creaked at every movement, and Mademoiselle Zélie, who was for the moment quiet, perceived that the neighboring chamber was inhabited.

"Oh, there is someone in there," she said. "I have a man or woman neighbor. Well, they must have heard my conversation with Poussard. After all, I don't care; I am mistress in my own room. I should like to know if it is a man or a woman who is in there."

Zélie, forgetting the loss which she had just suffered, began to sing the "Tyrolienne" and an air from "Œdipe." Dancers are philosophers; they do not brood over their sorrows.

"I have a droll neighbor," said Adolphe to

himself, trying in vain to go to sleep. "She was crying a moment ago, and now she is singing, just as I was ready to go and console her."

Weary of singing, Zélie listened against the wall which separated her from Adolphe, but heard nothing. "Is it possible that he is asleep in the midst of my trill?" she said to herself. "Ah, I must assure myself of that."

She struck several blows with her fingers on the wall; and Adolphe, who had just closed his eyes, heard at the same time Zélie's voice.

"I ask your pardon, madame," said the dancer, "but I should like to know the hour."

"It is not seven o'clock, madame," replied Adolphe.

"It is a man," said Zélie to herself; "and it must be a young man, for he has a sweet and tender voice."

Assuming a genteel and flute-like tone, she approached the wall. "Thank you very much, monsieur; I am infinitely obliged to you. My watch has stopped; otherwise, I should not have disturbed you."

"Really," said Adolphe to himself, "he would be fortunate who could sleep near her. If I do not answer her, perhaps she will leave me in peace."

Zélie waited for her neighbor's response; but she waited in vain.

"He does not like to talk, it seems," she said,

going and coming in her chamber, moving her chair, and disarranging each article in such a manner as not to permit her neighbor to sleep; singing by turns the couplets of a new vaudeville, or operatic airs, and interrupting herself only to talk aloud, as though addressing someone.

"Ah, if it should be fine weather today, we would have that picnic with the duenna.

"Ah, you have some rights supreme
As lord of —

"But I must not forget the rehearsal at noon.

"Ah, one always returns
To his first love —

"What the devil have I done with my comb? Did I break it?

"O grenadier! thou wilt afflict me
If thou dost leave me now —

"If I do not dance tomorrow I really must go to the opera. Oh, that is the stage! The women there are so fortunate and respected!

"Amuse yourselves, shake yourselves,
Dance, pretty girls! —

"Ah, I shall not be happy until I am there. Wait! What is this in my bag? Ah, it is a billet-doux! That little violinist who is in the orchestra slipped it in there. Ah, now we shall laugh.

"'Mademoiselle, I love you more and more.'

(Well, with me, it is less and less.) 'I feel that I cannot live without you.' (Will you think of that?) 'When I see you on the stage, I no longer know what I am playing.' (Poor little thing!) 'Your steps make me tremble; your pirouettes make me die; and when you lift your leg beside me I believe that heaven is opening!' (Well, is he ever going to end?) 'Your beautiful eyes turn my head! I take my B-flats for B-sharps, and the rests for sighs.' (Well, so that he does not take his bow for sugar candy it will do no harm.) 'In fact, mademoiselle, I lay all my fortune at your feet. I have nothing, in truth; but, nevertheless, I can maintain you on a pretty footing; because, with talent, one is sure of a fortune sooner or later.' (Yes; but I do not want to wait for the 'later.') 'I want to give a concert for my benefit at Nogent, and if you consent I will offer you the product, which we will spend together.' (Yes, be careful not to lose it.) 'I await your response in the delirium of uncertainty.' You will wait a long time, my friend. These little eight-hundred-franc musicians who wish to associate with a première danseuse! Really, it is pitiful!

"'Tell me, my old man, tell me, do you remember?

"Still, if he were a handsome fellow, one might have some sympathy for him; but he is a little ugly old thing, with red hair and a flat nose,—a perfect fright!

"You will not get there, little rascal, —
Tra la, la la, tra la la lere."

While she sang, talked and moved about, Zélie occasionally put her ear to the wall; but she heard no sound. Impatient, and no longer able to restrain herself, she knocked quite softly.

"Monsieur, monsieur, would you have the kindness to lend me a pitcher of water? I have absolutely none, and I need water at this moment."

Adolphe made no response; but Zélie, not discouraged, knocked again.

"Monsieur, you will render me a great service if you will lend me a jug of water. I am really ashamed to importune you for such a little thing; but if it disturbs you to get up, I will come to your room and get it."

"Mademoiselle, I have no water in my room," replied Adolphe angrily. "I drank all I had before I went to bed, and I cannot offer you any."

"He drank a whole pitcher of water yesterday evening," said Zélie to herself. "The idea! This is a little too much; this young man must drink like a duck, which does not give me a great idea of his finances. All the same, I want to know him; he does not seem very anxious to make my acquaintance, — another reason why I burn to make his. Ah, he will not disturb himself to give me water. I shall presently employ another means."

Zélie recommenced her singing, her coming and going in her chamber; but she no longer knocked on the wall. Adolphe judged from the sounds that she was taking gymnastic exercises; but at least this would not prevent his sleeping, and he was just closing his eyes when a crashing noise caused him to spring almost out of bed. The sound was like the combined fall of a person and a piece of furniture, and was followed by prolonged groans. Adolphe recognized the voice of his neighbor,—

"Oh, how unfortunate! I've broken my foot! Oh, how I suffer! I cannot get up! O my God! and no one to help me!"

These complaints, pronounced in a suffering tone, touched Adolphe's heart.

"Now she is hurt. It seems as though it were done on purpose to prevent me from sleeping; but still one cannot be inhuman. She is afraid to knock on the partition; but I can hear, from her moans, that she is suffering. Let's go and help her, for I must give up all hope of sleep."

He rose hastily, slipped on his trousers and waistcoat, and ran out. He easily found his neighbor's door, which was not fastened; but Adolphe knocked.

"Who is there?" responded a feeble voice.

"It is I, mademoiselle,—your neighbor. I heard you fall, and have come to help you."

"O monsieur, how good you are! Please come in."

Adolphe pushed the door open, and found himself in Mademoiselle Zélie's apartment, if a closet under the roof on the fifth floor can be called an apartment.

A bird's-eye view of the place offered a strange picture, which corresponded sufficiently with the idea which Adolphe had formed of the mistress of the lodging. In the back of the room was a bed without rod, without curtain; upon an old walnut bureau was a pretty mahogany dressing-case, the mirror of which was broken. A card table, on which were visible the remains of supper and the preparations for breakfast; some dilapidated chairs; a new couch covered with spots; a wash-stand, of which the marble was broken, and on which dirty water was standing; a volume of a novel; a chandelier; some little combs; a flask and a bonbonnière, were noticeable. On the mantelpiece were pots of rouge, ribbons, a pitcher of water, a fichu, some gloves and a wash-basin. Here and there about the room were scattered different articles of a lady's wardrobe. Upon one chair rested a skirt; another held a corset; in a corner was an elegant gown with slippers; upon the sofa a camel's-hair shawl was thrown, a part of which swept the floor; upon the bed were heaped, pell-mell, stockings, a handkerchief, a lace collar, shoes of satin, and laces. Against the blind hung a costly hat; and a little farther along on the floor dragged some garters, a bonnet, garlands,

and some tongs. In the midst of all this chaos, Mademoiselle Zélie was extended in a sufficiently graceful attitude against an overturned chair, in a disorder which one might call an artistic effect, but in which there were perhaps some traces of coquetry.

Mademoiselle Zélie was a person of from eighteen to twenty years, but excessive labor — for a dancer works very hard — had necessarily fatigued her and deprived her somewhat of the freshness of youth. She was a rather pretty brunette, with tolerably good outlines and an agreeable figure, which, however, in the morning light, lacked in the way of charm something of the roundness of neck and bosom which is seen in the Venus de' Medici and the Galatea of Girodet; in the evening our dancer's figure was superb. Her black eyes were lively and bright; they gained much from the neighborhood of the footlights, because then the dark line which surrounded them was not visible. Finally, her teeth were very white, and her mouth looked very fresh — under the lights.

Despite the slight blemishes which injured her mischievous face, Mademoiselle Zélie could still make conquests even in the daytime. Her malicious glance, her attractive figure, her lively manner, were not lacking in charm and attractions.

Adolphe paid no attention to all this; he cared little whether his neighbor were pretty or homely. He had come to serve her, not to look at her.

But Zélie lost nothing; with one glance she examined her neighbor. The result of this analysis was much to Adolphe's advantage, and she was charmed to make her young neighbor's acquaintance.

Adolphe approached Zélie with a very sympathetic air, for he believed her seriously hurt, and she was obliged to bite her lips to avoid laughing.

"You are hurt, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, monsieur. I do not know how I fell. I was trying a step which I am to take in a new ballet, and my leg came against this chair. I tripped — without you I don't know how I could have dragged myself up."

"Is it only the foot which hurts you?"

"Yes, the foot and my side a little, too. Please help me to get to my bed. Pass your arm around me — there, like that. Oh, don't be afraid of holding me too tight."

"Could you walk?"

"O good Heavens, no; you must carry me. Lift me right up; I am not very heavy."

Adolphe carried Mademoiselle Zélie, who allowed herself to be lifted as gracefully as possible. He was surprised to see that, in spite of the pain she seemed to feel, she had the courage to laugh gayly; and she showed her teeth in a most becoming fashion, as you may imagine.

Adolphe placed his neighbor upon the bed, and

supposed his task was finished; but he was by no means at an end.

"I'm not at all well," said Zélie, glancing languishingly towards her neighbor. "Monsieur, will you help me turn over? Wait; pass your arm under me, a little lower down. O God, how I am suffering! Help me to raise my leg. Really, I cannot move. Raise my body a little. Oh, I believe I feel still worse."

"The devil!" said Adolphe to himself. "This woman asks me to handle her without the slightest hesitation. I suppose she has no evil intentions, but it is a little strange. Fortunately for me, she is rather good-looking."

Men are always men at twenty-one, and it would be difficult to give much assistance to a pretty woman without becoming a little interested; but Adolphe loved Eugénie, and, besides, he did not care to be a successor to M. Poussard; so he left the bed and the young lady, and had no thought but to go about his business.

The dancer looked at Adolphe with an astonished air. "What, monsieur! are you going to leave me?" she said.

"Yes, mademoiselle; it is late, and I have business; but I will send someone to you from the house."

"Oh, truly you are very gallant."

"It appears to me that I have done everything that I could."

"Oh, do you think so?" replied Zélie, smiling with a mocking air.

"Yes, and I believe you are suffering less; I will send the portress to you."

"Ah, don't give yourself any trouble, monsieur. I will try to get along."

As she said this, Zélie leaped from her bed, laughing desperately at the face which Adolphe made. "Did you really suppose I was hurt?" she cried, hopping around the chamber.

"And why should I not have thought so? What motive could you have for deceiving me?"

"I was determined to show you that you cannot refuse a glass of water with impunity, and to get you out of bed and see what you looked like, monsieur."

"You played your part very well, and I thank you, mademoiselle, for the lesson you have given me."

"Oh, it is not a lesson, unless you want to learn how to dance. I will teach you that with great pleasure."

"Thank you; but I have no desire to learn to dance."

"That is a pity; you would be charming at the theatre; and indeed, you would have to lose that severe air. I never saw a young man so serious."

While she spoke Mademoiselle Zélie hopped and skipped, made leaps and pirouettes, and some-

times lifted her leg as high as his shoulder. Adolphe had never visited a danseuse, nor frequented the wings of a theatre. He regarded her with complete astonishment, because she was an entire novelty to him.

"I am sure I waked you up very early this morning," said Zélie, going on with her practice. "You heard my quarrel. Well, what could I do? The wretch had deceived me, and I am delighted to be rid of him. Now I am as free as air; but I will have no more sentiment; that is ended. Men are all false; they are not worth the sighs you give them: so I shall not love any more; I shall devote myself to my art. Dancing is a hard profession, and it takes all one's strength to become perfect in it. May I ask what monsieur does?"

"I do nothing, mademoiselle."

"Nothing? The devil! That's a beautiful way to do. I should like to change places with you. Then I shouldn't have to dance at that hole. I suppose you live on your income?"

"No, mademoiselle; I have no income."

"Oh, that's different. — But won't you be kind enough to lace my dress for me, behind? I forgot that I am going to take breakfast with some of my friends, and they are waiting for me."

"I don't know how to lace gowns, mademoiselle."

"But where do you come from? You don't

know anything. It is very easy; I will show you. If you wish to take breakfast with us you will be very welcome, monsieur."

"Thank you; but I only visit persons with whom I am acquainted."

"Oh, you are not like other young men; you have the air of an original. Come on, neighbor; try to be good-natured and amiable."

"No, neighbor; I am going back to my own place."

"What, monsieur! and you won't fasten my gown or put in a single pin for me?"

"I tell you I know nothing about those things, but I will send you the portress."

"Go to the devil with your portress! Oh, what a bear I have for a neighbor."

Adolphe did not listen further to Zélie, but returned to his own room, saying to himself, "What a difference there is between this woman and Eugénie!"

And Zélie said to herself, "What a difference there is between this young man and Poussard, who made love to me over the first glass of beer!"

CHAPTER VIII

The Wisest Man Would Have Done the Same

Adolphe had soon finished his modest breakfast, and he immediately returned to the Rue Saint Martin to recommence his promenades before that house which he was forbidden to enter; but as usual he did not get even a momentary glimpse of Eugénie. Could her illness have become more serious? This idea almost distracted the poor young man, who would have given all that he possessed, if he could by that means have obtained the slightest news of his sweetheart. He firmly decided not to take his departure without first interviewing the good Jeanneton.

"If I am not allowed to enter the shop," he said, "at least the street is free, and nobody can prevent me from walking there as much as I please, although this old clerk acts as if he had been commanded to watch me."

In fact, Bidois, who had received such instructions from Madame Moutonnet, went from time to time to mend his pen on the doorstep of the shop, and smiled somewhat mockingly as he saw the young man pass. But Adolphe, noticing Bi-

dois' little game, decided to give him a lesson which would remove from him all desire to spy upon his movements. He waited until the old clerk stood well outside, and was absorbed in the business of trimming his pen. The young man came up softly and brushed against Bidois with such violence that he jumped, and only just saved himself from falling; but he dropped his pen, and his knife rolled into the gutter.

"The devil take them all!" exclaimed Bidois, as he violently slammed the shop door and took his place again at his desk, in anything but good humor. "I shall not mix up in their affairs any more. They can arrange them to suit themselves. There! I have lost a lovely pen, and a knife that had not been sharpened more than ten or a dozen times. This young fellow brings me bad luck. He nearly strangled me the other day. Madame Moutonnet can say what she will. I am in the house as a clerk, to look after the accounts and the bills; but I will not bother myself with her daughter's love affairs. That is a little too dangerous. From this time I shall be neutral in the matter."

Adolphe waited with impatience until Jeanneton should come to bring him some consolation. Gradually the day drew to its close. The maid left the shop, and went to meet our lover at the place which she had indicated.

"Why have I not seen Eugénie?" Adolphe

asked her as soon as he saw her. "Why has she not been in the shop today? Is she worse?"

"No, monsieur; thank Heaven, she's a little better, though she's still very downhearted. But it's your fault if mamzelle isn't in the shop. They have noticed that you are in the street all the time, and Madame Moutonnet told the poor little thing this morning that she could not leave her room until she goes to be married."

"O Jeanneton! what do you tell me? I cannot see her! I cannot speak to her again!"

"Gracious, monsieur, how will you do it? Madame isn't joking. Eugénie weeps and grieves all day long. It breaks my heart."

"Jeanneton, good Jeanneton, let me see her; let me console her."

"Oh, that's impossible, monsieur."

"If you refuse me, I'll do something desperate. I'll set fire to the house."

"Oh, now, you'd broil us all. That would be a fine way to comfort her!"

"At least, she shall not marry Dupont."

"But wait, monsieur; don't do such foolish tricks as that."

"O Jeanneton! I don't know what will become of me. I'll throw myself into the river."

"Oh, he'll be in the river! Oh, these lovers are terrible! And what will become of your father, monsieur? Don't you love him any more? Don't you think of him?"

"Alas, Jeanneton, love has turned my head. My father has been ill for some time. I ought to go to see him, now that I am at liberty. He lives at Senlis, — that is not far from here; but I can think of nothing but Eugénie. She has put everything else out of my head."

"If this continues you will not last long. You have changed very much in the last few days. Why do you despair so? This marriage will not take place for a month, and perhaps it will be two. In that time you can make a fortune."

"Oh, that is impossible. I have no relations except my father, who has suffered reverses. He had a brother who went to the Indies when young, and no doubt he is dead, for no one has heard from him since. You see that I cannot hope for any money unless I make it myself."

"Yes, and one doesn't make a fortune in a month. Ah, if you could only win a prize in the lottery."

"Ah, Jeanneton, what a resource you are offering me! If I were poor and a gambler, I should soon be a rascal."

"Ah, you are right, monsieur; do not play; it is a wicked habit. But how will you get rich?"

"But now it is not a question of getting rich, but of how I can see Eugénie. I shall be rich enough if she is faithful to me."

"Yes, but that fortune would not match your rival's packages of candles."

"Jeanneton, I shall not leave you until you promise to let me speak to Eugénie."

"Oh, I can't promise you that."

"You must, or I shall die. Tonight, when everyone is asleep, you can easily open the alley door and let me into the house."

"O monsieur! what are you saying? You make me tremble. If anyone should find out!"

"They will not know anything about it."

"If they should discover it!"

"Impossible."

"Madame sleeps with one eye open since she has found out her daughter is in love."

"I will only stay a moment."

"Ah, if a lover once gets in, it takes the very devil to get him out."

"But you will be there, Jeanneton; you will not leave us. I will only speak to Eugénie in your presence."

"All very good, but I dare not."

"Jeanneton, you love Eugénie, and you refuse that I should console her for a moment."

"I refuse because I love her; such consolations are very dangerous."

"Oh, I thought you were sympathetic, and I am very much deceived."

"I will go and consult mademoiselle, and if she wishes, I will let you in tomorrow."

"O Jeanneton, how I love you! Let me hug you."

"Take care! take care! the passers-by will take you for a madman. I'll be here tomorrow at the same time, and tell you what mademoiselle has decided; but keep away from the street, so they will not be so suspicious."

"Don't worry; tomorrow I'll stay at home until the hour of our meeting."

Jeanneton left him. Adolphe returned to his room, thinking already of the next day, and wondering how he should pass the time until the hour of his rendezvous. As he mounted the stairway he met his neighbor, wearing her plumed hat, her beautiful gown, kid shoes, and with the camel's-hair shawl over her shoulders. Adolphe paused to let her pass. Zélie was delighted that he should see her well dressed. She had waited for an hour, so that she might descend the stairs as he mounted. She looked at him, nevertheless, with a mocking air, dancing and humming a fragment of operatic music.

"Who would believe," said Adolphe to himself, as he looked after her, "that this elegant woman lived in a little attic room. She is really very pretty. — But I must eat my supper and go to bed and dream; time flies quickest when we are asleep."

Our lover slept soundly until midnight, when a knocking at his door disturbed his repose. "Who is there?" said Adolphe, without leaving his bed.

"Open the door, neighbor, I beg you, and give me a light."

"What! are you waking me up again, mademoiselle? Have you sworn that you would not let me sleep?"

"Good Heavens! it's only midnight, and I didn't know that you were in bed."

"I have been asleep since seven o'clock."

"In bed at seven o'clock,—a young man! But that's horrible,—actually like the chickens!"

"That's none of your business, I think;—let me sleep."

"Light my candle for me, and I'll let you alone."

"I have no light, and I can't give you one."

"Well, strike the steel for me; I can't find mine."

"I don't know how to strike it."

"Well, isn't he polite and obliging! It is so pleasant to have a neighbor like monsieur!"

"It's no worse than to have a neighbor like you."

"You're the first one that I haven't pleased."

"Well, each one to suit himself."

"Well, your way is not very pleasant."

"Mademoiselle, will you let me sleep?"

"You ought to be tired of sleeping if you have been in bed since seven o'clock. Say, now, neighbor,—oh, you think I'll let you alone, but I shall knock here until daylight."

"I'll complain tomorrow to the proprietor."

"Well, that doesn't matter, for day after tomorrow I shall move."

Zélie continued to knock at Adolphe's door. He decided at last to open it to put an end to the noise. He arose, opened the door and slipped back to bed. Mademoiselle Zélie entered, groping her way about in the darkness.

"Oh, that's very lucky; he has opened at last. That's very kind, but you can't see in here."

She groped her way to Adolphe's bed, upon which she sat down for the time being.

"Oh, I can't go any farther. This new step is very fatiguing."

"What are you doing now, mademoiselle?"

"I should think you could see; I'm resting."

"It seems to me you could rest just as well in your own room."

"I suppose I could, but I would rather rest here."

"Where is your steel? Give it to me, so that I can strike a match."

"My steel! Oh! oh! Isn't he absurd about my steel? Look for your own, monsieur; that will be better. I am sure that you will strike fire immediately."

Adolphe rose without replying and, after much trouble, found his steel, which he struck again and again, but the tinder would not light; and at last he threw stone, tinder and matches on the floor,

swearing that the landlord had not provided a decent steel.

During this time Mademoiselle Zélie, who had come into her neighbor's room in a very light costume, did not find it comfortable to be exposed to the cold, and slipped into Adolphe's bed.

"Now," said the young man, "I've done all I could to get you a light; let me sleep."

There was no response. "Is it possible she has gone?" said Adolphe to himself. "It is very fortunate."

He got into bed once more, and uttered a cry of surprise when he found himself unexpectedly in someone's arms. At first he tried valiantly to get away; but he was held, and he did not get away.

There are different sins; there are sins of intention, and sins of weakness, and the sins of weakness are usually followed by the deepest contrition. "Oh," said Adolphe, "how could I for a moment have forgotten Eugénie! But I swear that it shall never happen again. No, dear Eugénie, I will be worthy of you. Hear my oath,—that I will never forget you again for a single moment."

CHAPTER IX

A First Night

Adolphe had steadfastly resolved that he would not return to his lodging during that day in order that he might avoid Mademoiselle Zélie; but he had also determined not to be seen in the neighborhood of Eugénie's house; it was therefore necessary that he should find some way of passing the time until the evening, and so our young man walked about at random. It was the middle of December, the weather was cold but clear, and, although he was rather lightly dressed, Adolphe did not feel the chill wind which blew, because his blood was overheated by love and anxiety.

He gave the preference to the quieter and more solitary streets, for in the busy part of Paris one cannot walk lost in dreamy reveries of love without great danger of being crushed by passing vehicles. Adolphe, therefore, left the crowded thoroughfares of the city and followed the more remote boulevards, where he met only a few workmen who were going to the drinking shops, or some strolling lovers who, like himself, were seeking solitude, and who did not feel the sharpness of the

weather. To lovers, summer has no heat, and winter no cold.

Adolphe looked with an envious eye at the young workmen and the grisettes, at the clerk and the little shop girl, at the fashionable lady and the dandy, and even at the street porter and at the orange woman who passed him. Each one was seeking, according to his fortune and station, the place where he could best entertain his companion and enjoy a delightful tête-à-tête. The fashionable gentleman conducted his mistress to the establishment of Peltan at the Pavillon Français; the clerk took his sweetheart to the Ile d'Amour; the workman went with his girl to Desnoyers; and the porter smilingly entered a wine merchant's shop, where there were private rooms.

"How happy they are!" said Adolphe to himself with a sigh. "What a day one passes with the person one loves! Ah, if I were rich, if Eugénie were mine, that is the way I would spend all my time; and this happiness would seem to me always fresh."

Adolphe reasoned falsely, but one never foresees that one may weary of what one desires; and yet nothing is truer than the wise maxim: Constant pleasure is no pleasure.

But as Adolphe had not known the joy of possessing the woman he adored, he must be pardoned if his plans were a trifle foolish; we are none of us any wiser. He took dinner at a little

restaurant which he found on his way, and at dark turned toward Eugénie's house, trembling with hope and fear, eager to see Jeanneton, but not daring to flatter himself that he should be so fortunate as to meet his dear Eugénie, whom he had not seen for three whole days,—three centuries to the lovers. The little distraction of the night meant nothing to Adolphe, and did not prevent his being more in love than ever.

Jeanneton came at last. "Well?" exclaimed Adolphe. "Eugénie?"

"Monsieur, she consents. Pardi! she's so anxious to see you, she can't help consenting."

"O Jeanneton! my good Jeanneton!"

"But be still, and listen to me."

"I am listening. She permits. I shall see her. What happiness!"

"How tiresome these lovers are! Either despairing or in ecstasy; there's no half-way with them."

"I am calm, Jeanneton; I am listening to you."

"You will come at midnight; do you hear? Not before; because everyone must have time to go to sleep."

"Yes, yes; at midnight."

"I'll open the door as softly as possible. You'll follow me without making any noise. I'll take you to my room, and mamzelle will find you there. I won't leave her a minute, either."

"Yes, Jeanneton. Oh, do you think I could have any other purpose than just to see Eugénie — to speak to her, and to hear her say with her own lips that she will be true to me?"

"I don't say that you have any other thought; but lovers — it's best not to trust you. I'll be there, providing nothing happens. I'm risking a good deal for you, because if madame finds us out I shall be sent away; and this poor Eugénie, — oh, I tremble to think of it. It shows how much she loves you; think what she's risking for you."

"Oh, I know what a prize her love is, and Heaven will protect us."

"Well, it's decided then; let us take courage. Adieu, monsieur, until midnight."

"Yes, I understand. You won't fail to open the door?"

"Don't worry; that is, unless madame takes the key, or locks up her daughter."

"What a dreadful idea!"

"But that has not happened yet; we won't borrow trouble. Adieu, Monsieur Adolphe."

"Until tonight, Jeanneton."

Our lover departed with long steps, almost transported with joy at the idea of being near his Eugénie, and of being able to talk with her at his ease, which he had not done since Saint Eustache. But it was only six o'clock; he was not to be happy until midnight. How could he kill

time until then, how employ the six long hours which must elapse before he could go to Rue Saint Martin? Should he walk? He had been doing nothing else since morning; he must try to interest his eyes and occupy his mind so that his heart might rest.

Finding himself on the boulevard before a theatre, "I will go in," he said. "It is a little extravagance which my means do not permit; but for this one time; and, besides, today is not an ordinary one. Enter."

Adolphe joined the long line before the ticket office, which augured well for the play he was going to see. "It must be something good, or so many people would not allow themselves to be pushed and jostled about in this way; so that I think I've chosen well."

After half an hour of waiting the box office opened.

"Why do they not open it sooner?" asked Adolphe. "They would have spared us half an hour of weariness, and we should have entered without a crowd."

"Monsieur," replied a little man in spectacles, who, though he had arrived last, had succeeded, by pushing to right and left, in reaching the head of the line. "Monsieur, the management is glad to have before the theatre a crowd which struggles and cries. It is even no harm if an accident happens. A play of which they can say, 'They

killed themselves at the door; there was an arm broken, and one person was suffocated,' — such a play becomes the fashion. All Paris wishes to give itself this little pleasure. You see even the fashionable people, — ladies in cashmere shawls, who, putting aside their usual habits, dine early in order to get themselves hustled. There is a certain glory in saying, 'I am inside.' In fact, monsieur, that is the way of the world. One no longer goes to the Légataire, for you see no one there. You go to Georges Dandin if it has a line."

"In that case I see that the management is very wise to let the crowd grow, and in their place I should do the same."

At last the signal was given. The immense crowd poured like a stormy sea toward a barrier which was opened at regular intervals. Adolphe noticed that the complimentary tickets were given the preference over those paid for, and that they were so numerous that half the people who waited before the office could not get a seat. He said to himself, "If that is another calculation of the management, I do not understand it."

He got his own ticket at last; but he was not yet in the theatre, the most difficult part of the business, for the crowd had increased. Adolphe found himself almost carried along in the midst of this multitude, where all ranks were confounded. There the strongest made the law, and you saw a

little woman implore the protection of a big man in jacket and cap of otter-skin, whose vigorous arm could easily make a passage for her.

"I am suffocating; I can endure no more," said a lady in a turban and a silk dress. Beside her was a stout woman in an apron, who also groaned. A little grisette near by was used to being pushed about; she only said in a supplicating voice, "Gentlemen, I beg of you be a little easy."

"Take care of my head;" "You are pulling my shawl," was heard on all sides.

"You have knocked off my hat," another one exclaimed.

"You're stepping on my feet."

"Where is my husband?" cried a woman in tears.

"I am here, my sweet; don't be afraid," responded the husband, who could not possibly rejoin his better half. "These gentlemen won't do you any harm; they are too gallant; they will protect you."

"Good gracious! don't push like that."

"Shut up! Is it my fault? They are pushing me, and I have to push."

"There are some men who are no better than boors," said a stout mamma of forty years, looking furiously behind her. "If I had an escort you shouldn't treat me like that."

A new movement was felt. Adolphe had entered, and he saw a gentleman, the tail of whose

coat was torn, another who had lost the crown of his hat, and a lady whose gown was no longer more than a waist, because the skirt had been left hanging to the entrance posts. But everyone was good-natured. These were even incidents of which one could afterward boast.

Adolphe, who had bought a modest ticket for the parquet, succeeded in wriggling almost to the middle of the section. The theatre was full, but the play was not to commence for half an hour; Adolphe addressed himself to his neighbor on the right, a rather well-dressed young man, who was keeping two places beside him, three in front, and four behind.

"This new play must be very good," said Adolphe to him.

"Oh, it will be splendid; it's by a great writer."

"Have you seen it yet?"

"Yes; I have been to all the rehearsals. The first act is a little cold, but the others warm up beautifully. There are some superb effects. When the father kills his child, because he is taken for the son of the other stupid, who has stolen him by the direct advice of the Prince, who is the traitor. — O Heavens, it is beautiful! I am sure the whole audience will be in tears."

"That must be very affecting. Has the play been running long?"

"Long? Where do you come from? This is its first presentation."

"Ah, it's a new piece!"

"Goodness! Would there otherwise be such a crowd?"

"Does everyone know it will be good?"

"I tell you it is by a famous man,—a clever man who knows his trade well. You surely are not very familiar with the theatre."

"No, I confess that I am not."

"And as for me, I never miss a first representation on the boulevards. I'd rather go without my dinner. And then, you see, the theatre forms, educates finely. You must not think that when I leave here I cease to think of it; on the contrary, it is graven on my memory; my head's fairly stuffed with theatrical selections."

Adolphe did not listen to his neighbor. He was thinking of Eugénie, and the talk of the young amateur had no longer power to distract him. But a tall man seated on his left struck him familiarly on the shoulder and asked him if the piece were well cast.

"Well cast," inquired Adolphe, who did not understand the tall gentleman; "what do you mean?"

"I mean, are there any great actors in the play?"

"My faith, monsieur, I don't know anything about it, and I can't tell you who is to play."

"You don't know anything? You are not in the habit of attending this theatre?"

"No, monsieur."

"It is a pity, then, that you came tonight, for it is a new piece and it will be very bad."

"Why, if it is to be so bad, have you come to see it?"

"Oh, as for me, I see everything. I am a literary man."

"Ah, there are some friends!" exclaimed the young man at the right of Adolphe, making a sign to five or six individuals who arrived in the parquet orchestra, and for whom he had kept places.

"I warn you," said the tall, thin gentleman, "that you have a battalion of clappers on your right."

"Of clappers?"

"Yes, of clappers; they are people who are paid to applaud; they come to sustain a work, whether right or wrong; but they won't have it all their own way. I am going to hiss, and I know five or six men of letters like myself who have drilled keys with the same intention, and who will use them."

"But, monsieur, it seems to me that isn't treating your brother craftsmen fairly."

"Ah, monsieur, this author is a wire-puller. They play nothing but his pieces. It is atrocious."

"Oh, monsieur, if he produces more than others, it seems natural he should be played more."

"Oh, monsieur, I write a great deal. I am in a condition to keep four or five theatres busy, and I cannot get a play in anywhere. Oh, you don't know the intrigues of the theatre."

"No, monsieur, thank Heaven."

The curtain raiser which preceded the new play at last commenced. Everyone kept on talking, but Adolphe responded neither to the right or the left, and he heard his neighbor say, "Perhaps he belongs to the cabal," and, on the other side, "I wager he is a complimentary."

At last the three taps were given; the new play was about to begin, and each party prepared for the part it was to play. The clappers tried to produce silence by a prolonged "Ssh!" The friends of the author, who must not be confounded with the people who applauded, disposed themselves to listen, and endeavored to inspire their neighbors with charity; while the enemies gave the signal of discord, expectorating, blowing their noses, coughing, and opening snuffboxes which imitated the quacking of a duck. Adolphe listened as well as a man could who already hoped that the play was over; and he often sighed at those passages which aroused the laughter of the audience.

"It is beautiful; it goes very well," said the young man at his right. "That's clever; it's going finely; and the costumes!—look, François; do you see the prince's plume? It's a real ostrich

feather;—and look at the leading lady's diamonds; she is famous for them and is very highly respected at the theatre."

Meanwhile his neighbor on the left remarked, "How very ordinary! What a commonplace intrigue! There is nothing original about it. Ah, there is a scene they have actually stolen from me!—an everlasting succession of exits and entrances. It is worthy of the Funambules. And these are the things they accept and play at this theatre!"

The neighbor on the left began his hissing, which was promptly stifled by the applause on the opposite side. The first act ended thus. The second act went much more slowly, and the public was bored. The friends of the author, perceiving that things were going badly, remained silent, their glance uncertain; they were undecided, and might remain so until the end. The clappers, on the contrary, applauded with more force than ever, with the intention of warming up the actors and the play. The members of the cabal made good use of their keys, and hissed while the clappers were applauding.

Actions followed words, and as the noise was constantly increasing, Adolphe feared that from words the audience would come to blows.

"Peace! silence!" "Out with the clappers!" "Down with the cabal!" "Be quiet, rascals," etc.

Such were the cries which nearly stunned poor

Adolphe, who found himself the centre of contending parties, and knew not whether to go or to remain till the end. But in the midst of this tumult the time rolled on, and that was what he wished.

The second act was finished, and the audience waited with impatience for the third, which would decide the loss or gain of the battle.

"The play is a failure," remarked the tall gentleman.

"The decorations in the third act will mend all that," said the tanner.

The piece would perhaps have been a failure, but in the third act the decorations were magnificent, and the public became enthusiastic. The man of letters made dismal grimaces and groaned between his teeth when he saw the enthusiasm rise. "They will soon be ruined," he muttered, "if they depend upon expensive decorations."

A very pretty ballet completely restored the good-humor of the audience. Adolphe looked at the dancing as he had listened to the play, scarcely knowing what went on. Presently a young dancer came upon the stage dressed "à la rosière," and she roused him to a little more attention.

The features of this dancer did not seem entirely unfamiliar; he studied her more closely, and was convinced that he had seen her somewhere. At last the memory of his young neighbor returned to him. It was really she; it was Zélie who was

before him, — Zélie dressed "à la rosière." He recalled the situation in which he had found her when he saw her first, and he could not help laughing a little as he remembered the scene.

Zélie danced gracefully. She was a little faded, a little tired, not quite so vigorous as she should have been; but with her graceful movements and brilliant costume she was charming. The rouge made her eyes look brighter; the dance offered a thousand means of displaying her grace and beauty, and everyone repeated about Adolphe, "What a pretty woman! What a charming dancer!" The literary man alone was displeased; he objected to everything. "She has no confidence, no rhythm, no vigor. She is pretty, if that is one's taste; but her foot is too flat, and her arm too long."

Adolphe was astonished that Zélie did not obtain more applause after her figure, which was very well danced; but the clappers remained motionless. There was no sign of approbation except the bravo of an old amateur, and the nodding of one of the regular theatre-goers. Adolphe remembered Zélie's quarrel with Poussard, and he divined the reason for this silence, which seemed quite displeasing to Zélie. He felt that an injustice was being done, and for the first time that evening he applauded with all his might.

His neighbor on the left looked at him mockingly, and his friend on the right wished to make

him keep quiet. "Silence during the ballet," he whispered.

"Heavens! I let you stun me during the play, and now I shall clap if it pleases me," replied Adolphe.

"Put the clapper out!" cried several voices in the orchestra.

"Be still," said the tanner; "they are making fun of you. It isn't everything to applaud; one must choose the right time."

"I thought you had some taste," said the tall gentleman, "but I see you are not a good judge of pirouettes."

At last the ballet was finished, the play went on, and then the noise began. The conclusion was hissed by some and applauded by others, and each tried to outdo the other. Both parties grew excited. There were menacing glances; fists were doubled; the literary man was the most intrepid hisser, and many turned against him. Adolphe was his neighbor, and received some of the blows which were directed toward him. He responded furiously, and the combat became general. They pushed, they pressed, and they climbed over the benches; the ladies in the orchestra chairs were driven upon the stage, those in the boxes began to scream; the musicians abandoned their posts, and the police took the place of the actors. After he had delivered his blows upon all who surrounded him, whether they were for or against the piece,

Adolphe, who had been transformed from a peaceful spectator into one of the most furious combatants, succeeded at last in making his way from the orchestra and from the building, vowing that he never again would be guilty of such idiocy as to buy a ticket for a first night's representation of anything.

CHAPTER X

A Rendezvous. A Broken Vow

It was still far from midnight, but despite that fact Adolphe set out for Eugénie's dwelling. He stopped awhile at some distance, for Bidois was closing the shop. Soon everyone would go to rest, and when they were all asleep Jeanneton would let him in. The shop was now shut and he might venture to approach the house without further fear of being seen. Presently, however, someone left M. Moutonnet's house. Adolphe kept carefully in the shadow and watched. It was a man. From his figure and the rattle of his trinkets, Adolphe recognized Dupont. It was his rival, who had, no doubt, been making arrangements for his approaching marriage. This idea exasperated the young man. He ran after the grocer, and was about to speak to him, but he stopped himself; he did not know what he should say to this stupid Dupont, but he knew that he should forbid him to marry Eugénie.

He reflected, however, that within an hour he should see his sweetheart, and then he could talk over with her the best means of preventing this hateful union. Why arouse Dupont's suspicions

by a violent and useless scene? No, he had better wait. It would be time enough to seek a quarrel if other expedients failed him.

Adolphe stopped to look after Dupont, and said to himself, "You will not enjoy the happiness you are dreaming of."

But the young man was deceived when he supposed the grocer was thinking of Eugénie. He was really absorbed in calculating his profits in a big sugar deal, which was just about concluded.

Our lover returned to the house which he was so eager to enter. The hour grew late; pedestrians were rare, and carriages were seldom heard. It was the only quiet time in this thickly settled district.

"Good clock of Saint Nicholas, when will you deign to strike the hour?" cried Adolphe, walking back and forth, uneasily, in the little space of thirty feet, which he had traversed for the last hour.

Midnight sounded at length, and Adolphe ran to take his station at the alleyway. As he waited his heart beat with mingled hope and fear. Had Eugénie changed her mind? Had some obstacle intervened to prevent the carrying-out of their plans? Only five minutes had elapsed since the clock struck, and already Adolphe was in despair. Presently steps were heard; he recognized those of Jeanneton, who opened the door very softly. She had not brought a light, from motives of prudence.

"Give me your hand," she said to Adolphe, "and follow me without breathing."

"O dear Jeanneton!"

"Be quiet. How you tremble! But that's not strange. I'm trembling also."

The young man followed the maid into the kitchen, then into Jeanneton's room, lighted only by a lamp placed in the back of the hearth. There Adolphe found his Eugénie.

They ran into each other's arms, and for some moments were so deeply moved that they could not speak. Their hearts were full.

"It is you!"

"I see you again!"

"Dear Adolphe!"

"My Eugénie, how happy I am!"

"Ah, what a long time it has seemed to me!"

"And to me. What anxieties I have had!"

"Ah, I have thought only of you!"

"You love me! You have given me a great proof of it today."

"Oh, I shall never forget you! Love me forever, Adolphe, and I swear I will always be faithful to you."

Poor Eugénie did not demand too much, — to love her forever. It is the only oath a woman ever asks of her lover. Adolphe could not repress a slight sentiment of remorse, which shadowed his happiness; but he banished all disagreeable memories, and swore to Eugénie that he would

never cease to love her. No doubt he intended to keep his word; at least I prefer to think that such was his intention. Eugénie never doubted the constancy of her lover, because she could not conceive that a heart might be at the same time fond and deceitful, — two qualities which a man often unites.

Jeanneton, seated near the kitchen door, lent an attentive ear to the least sound from without, while she joined in the conversation of the lovers.

"You love each other; you swear you will always do so; that's very well," she said; "but that's not enough. They want to marry mamzelle to someone else, and you must prevent it."

"But how?" said Eugénie.

"I'll carry you off," cried Adolphe.

"Carry me off, Adolphe? Make me leave my parents? Oh, no; I would never consent to that."

"You would rather marry the grocer?"

"Besides," said Jeanneton, "where would you take mamzelle?"

"To my lodging, and then to the church. I will marry her, and it would not be long before Madame Moutonnet pardoned us."

"Oh, madame would not pardon you for a long time; and meanwhile you must live; you have no situation, no money."

"I have courage, some talent. I know how to work."

"And I also," said Eugénie.

"Ah, dear children, with courage and talent, one often dies of hunger."

"You discourage us, Jeanneton."

"Listen now. I don't want my Eugénie to be unhappy."

"I see," said Adolphe; "you will advise her to marry Dupont."

"If I had thought that, would I have brought you in here at the risk of being sent away myself?"

"But what can we do?"

"I don't know."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

An hour was passed in forming absurd projects, which were dismissed one after the other. Vows of constancy were repeated many times, which, while not advancing matters, were of great moment to the lovers. In vain Jeanneton warned them that their interview was too prolonged, that the light might be seen, and lead to discovery. "Just a moment, Jeanneton; we have so many things to say," was their only response.

At last they knew that they must separate. They held each other's hands; they looked fondly into each other's eyes; they separated, and then embraced again. Jeanneton was obliged to pull Adolphe's coat, and repeat, "Come now, monsieur, come."

Poor lovers! A hidden presentiment seemed to

warn them that this interview could not be renewed. At last Jeanneton succeeded in leading Adolphe away. They reached the stairway, and Eugénie was just going to her room, when someone was heard pushing violently at the alley door. The lovers remained immovable. Jeanneton groaned.

"Goodness!" said the maid; "I forgot to close the street gate. Who can it be so late, unless madame—"

"Can it be thieves?" said Eugénie.

"I will not leave you," exclaimed Adolphe.

At that moment a rough voice was heard outside the entrance way. "Halloo! you there in the house! Where the devil are the stairs? I can't find them. Ho, Catherine! Bring a light, my dear."

"Oh, I know the voice," said Jeanneton. "It's Jacques, the water-carrier. He gets drunk every day. He's mistaken our gate for his. But he'll wake up everybody. Go to your room quickly, mamzelle; and you, monsieur, fly before anyone comes down."

The young people felt that they must follow Jeanneton's advice, so they separated. Adolphe had only time to kiss Eugénie's hand; she ran hastily to her room, while the good maid pushed the young man to the stairs. There was little time, for the drunken fellow continued to shout to his wife and children about the stairway. Bi-

dois was at his window, and Madame Moutonnet had wakened her husband.

"But what if this man sees me?" said Adolphe, as he started.

"It is impossible, for you have no light. Besides, the essential thing is to get out of the house. If you could make Jacques go home. But go, monsieur! go quickly! Oh, if you had only listened to me before!"

Jeanneton returned to her chamber and closed the door. Adolphe flew down the stairs, four steps at a time, at the risk of killing himself. The water-carrier, believing himself in his own yard, kept looking for the staircase near the street, and could not find it because it was at the back of the court.

"Have these rascals walled up the stairs to keep me from getting home? They're capable of that. It's my wife or my daughter that's done it! They want to keep me from drinking. As if wine was dear this year!"

While Jacques grumbled to himself, and felt his way along the walls, Adolphe reached the passage and tried to pass without encountering the drunken fellow. He thought he had taken the side opposite to the water-carrier; but the passage was narrow, and just as he reached the street he felt his head and arms seized by Jacques' callous hands.

"Oh, there's someone! Who's there? That's

lucky," he cried. "Who is it? Is it you, neighbor Benoit? You'll help me find the stairway — won't you? These silly women won't bring me any light."

Adolphe made no reply, and tried to slip from the water-carrier's grasp; but the fellow stuck to him, and would not let him go.

"Who is it now? Answer! You don't answer. It's some rascal. Is it you, friend Benoit? Oh, you don't want to answer. You shan't get off. It may be a thief. I'll have a light presently. Here, Catherine! Suzon! All of you!"

Madame Moutonnet had awakened her husband and called Bidois and Jeanneton, and they all descended the stairs, each one carrying a light. Adolphe felt that he was lost if he waited longer. Making a final effort, he pushed the water-carrier so violently that he fell, and rolled into the middle of the passageway, while Adolphe ran to the gate, opened it, gained the street and disappeared.

Jacques, stretched in the passageway, could not get upon his feet. He yelled more lustily than ever, —

"It's a beggar! Stop him! He threw me down to get away! It's a thief! He's stolen something!"

At this moment everyone arrived upon the scene. Jeanneton appeared to be very sleepy; she had apparently just awakened; Bidois muttered that it was no longer possible to sleep quietly in

this house; M. Moutonnet had brought his gun, though his wife reminded him that thieves would not make so much noise and try to wake up the household; Madame Moutonnet led the procession, carrying a light; Eugénie was the only one who did not leave her room, but she prayed Heaven that Adolphe might have time to escape.

"Who is there? Who goes there? What do you want?" asked Madame Moutonnet, entering the passageway at the head of her companions.

"Oh, it's you, my little wife," said Jacques, still stretched on the pavement. "Come now! I've been calling you for two hours. You're to blame for my being knocked down."

"It's a man!" cried Bidois.

"It's a drunken fellow!" exclaimed M. Moutonnet.

"Oh, yes; it's Jacques, the water-carrier," said Jeanneton, as she came nearer.

"But how did he get in here?" said Madame Moutonnet.

They approached, and, while Bidois and Monsieur Moutonnet got him upon his feet, madame questioned him.

"Is it you, Jacques?"

"Yes, but — but it's not Catherine. God pardon me! it's Madame Moutonnet. Do you want some water?"

"You drunken fool! Don't you see that you are in my house and not in yours?"

"That's so. That's the reason I couldn't find the staircase."

"Madame, we must send him home," said Jeanneton; "I will help him to find his gate."

"One moment," said Madame Moutonnet. "How did you get in here, Jacques?"

"How? Why — how? Well — I didn't get in by the window."

"Was the gate open?"

"I guess — that is to say, I pushed, and I said, 'I'm going to get home.'"

"What does that mean, Jeanneton? It's your business to close the gate."

"Goodness, madame! I always close it; I don't see how it could be open."

"Thieves might get in and steal all we have," said M. Moutonnet.

"Father Moutonnet's right," said Jacques; "I had a fight with someone, and he threw me down, like the coward that he was. I couldn't hold him."

"Who threw you down?" demanded Madame Moutonnet.

"Who? Why, the thief, to be sure. He fled when I entered. I threw myself upon him, believing it was Benoit; but it wasn't Benoit, or he'd have said so. I grabbed him by the collar and the hair, but unfortunately the fellow slipped off like a smooth bullet."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed M. Moutonnet,

pulling his cotton nightcap down over his head; "do you hear what he says?"

"Oh, monsieur," replied Jeanneton, "don't you see that he's hardly able to stand?"

"What, woman! I'm drunk? Who dares to say I'm drunk? I'll teach her manners."

"That's not clear," remarked Madame Moutonnet; "he declares that someone threw him down."

"Oh, goodness! He fought with someone in the street."

"If it had been in the street," replied Bidois, "he wouldn't have fallen in the alley."

"Are you sure it was a man?" asked M. Moutonnet.

"Well — am I sure! That's a good one! The old codger! Don't you suppose I can tell the difference of sex? That's good."

"And he was coming from the house?"

"Ah, he was coming — was coming — I can't just say where he was coming from; but I felt him under my hand, as I was looking for the staircase; and says I to myself, 'It's Benoit,' and it wasn't Benoit."

"We can't get any information from him," said Madame Moutonnet; "but such a thing shall never happen again. Put the drunken fellow out, and everybody follow me."

They pushed the water-carrier into the street.

"Pardon me, friends, for the trouble I've caused

you. If they'd only put some lamps in the street, such things wouldn't happen. Another time I'll stay in my cellar."

While the drunken fellow looked for his house and his stairway, Madame Moutonnet locked the gate and put the key in her pocket; then she turned toward her daughter's room. Each one followed in silence, but not without trembling. The two men were afraid of finding a thief upon the way, and Jeanneton dreaded the results of the evening.

Madame Moutonnet entered her daughter's room. Eugénie was in bed and pretended to be asleep. "It is very surprising," said her mamma to herself, "that she sleeps, in spite of all the noise that has been made below."

Eugénie might have said the same, but she could think of no other way of avoiding her mother's eyes than keeping her eyes closed. Madame Moutonnet, having ascertained that there was no one in her daughter's room, left without speaking to her. She was sure that she was not asleep, and, when she went out, she locked the door and put the key in her pocket.

"You have seen nothing, my love?" asked M. Moutonnet, trembling.

"No, monsieur, I've seen nothing; but I know what I think. Still, we'll search the house before we go back to bed."

"Shall we get M. Pétrin, love? He never

sleeps at night, and I'll wager he'll gladly give us the aid of his strong hand."

"No, monsieur; it's useless to disturb M. Pétrin again. I'm certain there are no thieves, and you don't seem to perceive that we shall pass for imbeciles in the neighborhood."

"That's true, my dear."

They followed Madame Moutonnet, but they found no one. "This isn't clear," muttered Bidois to himself; "the door was open, and a man knocked Jacques down. If we're to sleep in peace, it's time they married Mademoiselle Eugénie."

Madame Moutonnet made a mental note similar to that of the old clerk, and decided to act conformably. Bidois returned to his room; M. Moutonnet went to bed; Madame Moutonnet stopped Jeanneton at the moment when the latter was about to go to her room.

"You can look for another place, Jeanneton," she said; "tomorrow you leave me."

"Good gracious, madame! what have I done, that you should send me away?" exclaimed Jeanneton.

"You know very well. I don't keep a girl who leaves gates open for thieves, drunkards, and perhaps lovers."

"O madame! you don't believe—"

"That's enough. We will settle it tomorrow. Don't try to explain. Go to bed."

Madame Moutonnet pushed Jeanneton into

her room, where she sat down for a good cry; for she could not be reconciled to leaving Eugénie.

On escaping from Jacques' grasp, Adolphe ran straight to his lodging, congratulating himself that he should reach there without being seen by Eugénie's parents. Sure of his sweetheart's love, he felt certain of triumphing over every obstacle. He was loved! With that sweet certainty, though his mind was not free from anxiety, his heart was satisfied. She had promised to be true to him. He should see her again, for these young people never dreamed that the arrival of the drunken man would disarrange their plans. They had promised to renew this sweet interview, and nothing more was necessary to assure the lover an ecstacy. A human being lives on hope; it is the coin used in every country, among all classes and with all people. We give hope to collectors, to invalids, to children, to prisoners, to lovers, to authors, to young ladies, and even to old men. We shower it upon the unfortunate, though we should do better for them by opening our purses. But hope is given gratis, and enables one very cheaply to assume the tone of a protector. The child lives in the hope of having a toy, the scholar in the hope of a prize, the young man in the hope of pleasing the one he loves, the mature man in the hope of making a fortune, the old man in the hope of being a centenarian. The young girl lives

in the hope of a faithful lover; the spinster cherishes with hope the idea that she will have a husband. The gambler hopes to win; the actor, to shine; the author hopes for success; the gourmand, for a good dinner; the little employé hopes to be chief clerk; the chief clerk hopes to be chief of division; the private hopes to be officer; the journalist, to be witty; the fop, to be observed; the coquette, to make conquests; the chemist hopes to find the philosopher's stone; the Jews hope for the Messiah; and the card-readers, for the secret of Cagliostro, who had none, but who, nevertheless, would have passed for a sorcerer if he had come into the world one or two centuries earlier. We all, therefore, hope; the sentiment is the charm of life, the vital fluid; it lends wings to the imagination, affords food to the intellect, and furnishes reveries for the mind; for we are happier far through what we hope to possess than in what we really have. The most sorrowful position in the world is that of an individual who has nothing to hope for.

Adolphe hoped, and he was right; but he flattered himself that he should return to his own room, and in this he was wrong. He reached his door, he searched for his key, he emptied and re-emptied his pockets, he felt himself from head to foot; but there was no key. He had lost it, either in his struggle with Jacques, or perhaps in the mêlee with which the play had closed.

There was no key; how could he get in? He pushed the door again and again, but it would not yield. If he had a hook he believed that he could open the wretched lock of this furnished room, for furnished rooms are always badly fastened; but he had none, and would have to waken his neighbors to get one. He had already had trouble enough rousing the porter, for at two o'clock in the morning most people are sound asleep.

Adolphe knew well that he could ask aid from Zélie; but he shrank with repugnance from turning to his neighbor, for he had sworn that he would not see her again, or at least that he would not speak to her. Did she really repel him? or was he afraid that he should yield to her attractions? Whatever the motive, it was strong enough to make him feel that he did not wish to expose himself to temptation, though the prospect of passing the night on the landing was extremely disagreeable. While making these reflections, Adolphe glanced mechanically at his neighbor's door, and saw to his surprise that she had a light. Could it be possible that she was up at two o'clock in the morning? Certainly Mademoiselle Zélie had the habit of retiring very late; but the night was far gone, and she must have been weary after her dancing.

Adolphe approached the door. There was no doubt as to the light in the dancer's room, and he decided to knock. Zélie rose, and opened to him.

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"I wish to return to my own room."

PHOTOGRAVURE FROM ORIGINAL DRAWING BY ALBERT DE FORD PITNEY.

"But you certainly have been fighting."

"It's possible I may have been."

"I'll wager it was for some woman."

"And what's that to you?"

"What! You say what's that to me? You may as well understand, monsieur, that I'm very jealous, and if I knew this woman I'd tear her eyes out, and yours too."

"Will you be kind enough to let me take your light, and lend me a hook, or something else, to open my door?"

"Oh, monsieur has lost his key?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"And is that the only reason you knocked at my door?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Oh, you monster! you ugly fellow! I detest you!"

"Have you a nail that's pretty strong?"

"Will you let me alone with your nails and your keys? They will open the door for you tomorrow, and you can stay here tonight. I shan't eat you."

"I wish to return to my own room."

"Isn't he kind! — Go to the devil, and let me sleep!"

Adolphe went out, shutting the door after him, and placed himself at the window in the landing, deciding to pass the night there; but the air was cold and damp, and a fine rain drove the young

man from the window. It was not possible to watch the stars, and address prayers to the planets that protect lovers.

Adolphe therefore seated himself on the stairway; but he had not been there very long when Zélie came out in her nightdress and her bare feet to look for her neighbor.

"Where are you?"

"I'm here."

"What! you prefer to sit on the stairs all night, rather than come to my room?"

"I do not love you, and I adore a charming woman,—a woman who has no equal. I wish to be faithful to her."

"Goodness, monsieur! you can be faithful to this phœnix; who asks you to be anything else?"

"You're young and pretty, and I'm a man, and—"

"Oh, monsieur is afraid of being tempted."

"Go back to your room; you'll make yourself ill."

"No; if you don't come, I'll stay here with you."

Zélie seated herself, in her nightdress, on the staircase, and Adolphe said to himself, "It will be inhuman to let her stay here." For the sake of humanity, and to save his neighbor from illness, Adolphe returned with her to her chamber; but he seized a chair, and determined to pass the night upon it.

Unfortunately his eye rested upon the wreath of roses which Zélie had worn in the ballet. He could not but recall her in this brilliant costume. It seemed as if he saw her again dancing lightly and with graceful springs, taking every step with taste, with precision. In spite of himself, the vision brought by the rose wreath took precedence of Eugénie's image.

Zélie turned and turned again in her bed. She coughed, she sang, she sighed; but nothing softened her visitor. At last she employed the great means, the infallible means which no one can ever resist, — she began to cry. Adolphe, astonished, pretended not to hear her; then, seeing that she did not cease, he asked what was the matter. Zélie did not respond, but wept the harder. Adolphe drew his chair to her bed, the tears fell faster; he approached still nearer, she sobbed; nearer yet, and her tears dropped like rain. As he approached, her trouble increased, and Adolphe knew not how to console her. He was at last so close that he could not come any closer, and then Zélie was no longer weeping; but after a while it was Adolphe who was broken-hearted, and said, "I am a monster; I am unworthy of her love. I swore that this should never happen again. Oh, I can never forgive myself!"

Adolphe did not weep, because men do not weep for sins of this sort, since they have become hardened in sin. Very different from King David,

who wept for his transgressions, the men of today are vain of their performances, as though that which should cause their deepest shame and contrition were a subject of vanity!

The remorse which Adolphe felt did not prevent him from sleeping until ten o'clock in the morning; but probably the fatigues of the evening before, the late hour at which he had gone to rest, his long walk in the morning, and the excitement of the hours which followed, would account for this long sleep.

Jeanneton, by her prayers and tears, had obtained from Madame Moutonnet a week's respite, in which to look for another place, and Eugénie's mother determined to take unusual precautions to avoid any unforeseen catastrophe during that time. Jeanneton was forbidden to enter Eugénie's room or speak to her; during the night the young girl was locked in her apartment, and in the daytime M. Bidois was ordered to watch the street constantly; while M. Dupont had been urged to have the banns published and take every possible means to hasten the moment of his marriage. The grocer believed that his future wife was ill for love of him, and he hastened to carry out all Madame Moutonnet's suggestions.

The day after the lovers' interview, Jeanneton, taking advantage of an errand on which she was sent, sought Adolphe to tell him what had followed the arrival of the drunken man. She felt

sure that the young man would be very anxious, and she wished him to understand all the new precautions which Madame Moutonnet was taking, so that he might find some way of corresponding with Eugénie.

Jeanneton knew Adolphe's address, and at nine o'clock in the morning she went there, and, ascending to his chamber, knocked again and again at his door. She did not hear any noise, and, not being sure that she had not mistaken the room, decided to knock at the next door. Zélie was awake and came and opened it.

"Pardon me, mamzelle; I think I have made a mistake. I am looking for M. Adolphe."

"M. Adolphe," replied Zélie, studying the servant with curiosity; "and what do you want of him, my dear?"

"You ask me what I want of him? Oh, I can only tell that to him."

"To him or to me, it's the same thing. Tell me your business and I'll inform him of it."

"What! It's the same, whether I tell you or him?"

"Of course; we are living together."

"You are living together! Oh, then, you're wrong; that isn't the young man I'm looking for."

"Come and see," said Zélie; "but don't make any noise, for he's still asleep, and I don't want to wake him."

Jeanneton softly advanced her head into the room; it was not a very large apartment, and one could easily survey the whole of it at a glance; she looked at the bed and saw Adolphe fast asleep. The poor woman stood petrified.

"Now, then," asked Zélie, in a low voice; "what's the matter?" She looked mockingly at Jeanneton, who stood motionless before the bed, unable to take her eyes from Adolphe.

"Is this the young man you wanted?" asked Zélie.

"Yes, yes, mamzelle," said the stout servant at last, speaking in a half-stifled voice. "Yes, it is he; but I wouldn't have believed it. Oh, my goodness! one must see it to believe it."

"Well, what is it you want?"

"Oh, nothing, mamzelle, — nothing at all; it's ended."

"But who sent you?"

"No one, — no one. — Poor little thing! If she knew that she would die; and I — I've lost my place, too, for what really wasn't worth the cost."

"What little one are vou talking about, my dear?"

"That's no business of yours. M. Adolphe is a villain, and that's all the message I want you to give him."

Jeanneton went away, her eyes full of tears, almost bursting with rage, with fury; and she

muttered all the way home, "These men, these wretched men! They are all just alike. Love them, give yourself all sorts of trouble for them, and while you are crying they will be having a good time with someone else. Oh, my poor little Eugénie!"

"She seemed like a good sort, this maid," said Mademoiselle Zélie; "but what did she mean with her 'little thing' and her 'villain'? Oh, I was to tell Adolphe that; but no, he'd kill me. He wouldn't look at me any more, and I adore him. A man who suffers from remorse because — Oh, that is really too funny!"

Adolphe awoke at last, blushing to find himself with Mademoiselle Zélie, but feeling that it would be ridiculous to renew his lamentations. He thought deeply none the less, pledging himself and vowing solemnly in his own heart that he would be wiser in future. Poor fellow! If he had known that Jeanneton had been there and had witnessed his sin, he would have thrown himself out of the window in his despair. Perhaps Zélie did well to withhold from him the knowledge of this damning fact.

Adolphe got his door opened, and returned to his own quarters. "I'll see you this evening, good friend," said his neighbor. "All right," responded Adolphe; but he decided that he would leave his lodgings that very day.

As he prepared to go out a letter was brought

to him. Adolphe recognized his father's writing, and hastily opened it and read the contents. His father had already learned that he had lost his place, but he did not reproach him; he only begged Adolphe to come and see him, because he was very ill and hoped that the sight of his son would cheer him.

Adolphe was tenderly attached to his father, whose troubles had long since broken his health, and felt that he must grant his request as soon as possible. "I'll go this very day," he said. "Eugénie's marriage will not take place just yet. I shall come back before anything new happens. I'll send a line to Jeanneton, to let her know of my journey, and ask her to write to me if anything transpires before my return."

Adolphe wrote his note to the maid, and left it with the portress of his former residence, who promised him that she would give the note privately to Jeanneton. Our young man, who had already made up his little bundle, for reasons of economy decided to go to Senlis on foot. It would be merely a pleasant walk; he could do it in eleven hours, and, if he walked briskly, would arrive that same evening. The length of the road did not frighten him; in thinking of Eugénie, he was sure of not being wearied on the way.

Leaving his bundle with his old portress, he set forth, delighted to leave the vicinity of Zélie. He could not resist the temptation of passing M.

Moutonnet's, and glanced furtively into the shop. Eugénie was not there; he saw no one but Bidois, who was mending his pen before the counter, and he passed on sighing.

As he left Paris and approached his father, vivid memories of his youth filled his mind. He was about to see again the author of his being, and he recalled their last separation, and the wise counsels his father had given him, which he had not exactly followed; his recommendation to learn self-control, which he had forgotten entirely; how he had begged his son to confide to him the very least of his troubles, and he had sworn that he would do so. His father was his very best friend; how could he have neglected him so long? How was it possible that the new love had driven entirely from his heart the recollection of this good father, whose greatest sorrow was now that they could not live together?

Depressed by these thoughts, he quickened his steps, that he might be with his father as soon as possible, though the consciousness of his illness and suffering shadowed the anticipated pleasure of the meeting. The night had fallen. Adolphe had not paused to rest on the way, but he felt no weariness. He was eager to arrive at Senlis. His heart beat quickly, filial love filled it, unrivalled, at that moment, by his love for Eugénie. Sweet sentiment of nature! — the truest, the purest, the most unchangeable. Should it not be stronger

than any other? As he approached Senlis, its houses were visible in the evening shadows. He passed through a part of the village, of which the inhabitants seemed to be wrapped in slumber, and, pausing before a simple little cottage, he drew a long breath. It was his father's abode.

CHAPTER XI

Adolphe's Father

Adrien Dalmont, for that was the name of Adolphe's father, was born in Franche Comté. He was the son of an honest merchant of Besançon, who having only two sons gave them as good an education as his means permitted; for knowing that he could leave them no fortune he wished them to be well-equipped for business, that they might, if so inclined, acquire one for themselves.

Georges, the elder of the brothers, was gay, frank and care-free, he greatly disliked all sedentary occupations, had no love for books, and was happy only when ranging the woods, mountains and fields of the vicinity.

Adrien, calmer and more rational, early evinced a sensitive disposition, and a loving, susceptible heart, and he was very sincere and faithful in his attachments.

The brothers were early orphaned. Their father could endow them with little money, he had no talent for acquiring wealth; and failed to make his mark in the world. Georges, with no anxiety for the future, decided to travel, see

the world and cross the seas. Adrien determined to enter the army.

But a cousin of their mother, dying without children, left all his money to the young Dalmonts,—a fortune which amounted to something like eighty thousand francs. This necessarily changed the plans of the two brothers.

Georges was twenty years old, but he had not yet fallen in love. His tastes ever drew him toward foreign shores. But he need not now travel like a poor adventurer who is seeking to make protectors and friends; he intended to buy a little boat, arm and equip it, and go forth to discover new countries; for he was persuaded that many were as yet undiscovered and unknown to us, which is highly possible, although I do not venture to affirm it.

Adrien had no desire to imitate his brother; he did not even dream of leaving his birthplace; for he had already fallen in love, and the young lady to whom he had given his heart lived at Besançon.

Juliette was the object of his love. She was only fifteen, but she was already recognized as the prettiest girl of the neighborhood. Her blue eyes, her sweet mouth, her golden hair, which curled naturally about her forehead, her graceful figure, and her gracious and gentle manners made her so charming that one could not behold her without experiencing the most tender emotion.

In this amiable child, grace and beauty were enhanced by virtue. Juliette was not in the least vain of her attractions; she was good, intelligent and modest, and by these qualities alone sought to make herself loved.

Could Adrien help adoring such a treasure? And could Juliette be unmoved by Adrien's love? The two young people seemed made for each other; the same tastes, the same virtues and the same sympathies united them; and their love, born in youth, seemed a love which would survive the temptations of early years and the cares of mature age.

Juliette was without means, and before he offered her his hand Adrien had felt that he must win enough to sustain a little household. The fortune of the cousin made everything easy; Adrien would be the possessor of forty thousand francs,—wealth for those who, like our lovers, are not ambitious.

Juliette, like Adrien, was an orphan. She was the daughter of honest farmers, who had been ruined by a fire, and she had no relatives excepting a brother, five years older than herself, who was left her only protector until she should marry. Juliette loved him tenderly, and, regarding him as one who stood in the place of her parents, had early learned to obey him.

Robert, this brother, was melancholy and morose; feeble of spirit and cold of heart, he loved

his sister, but had not the strength to work for her, nor the courage to defend or protect her. Since the fire had destroyed the family property, Robert, disheartened and discouraged, with no plans for the future and not troubling himself to do anything, had allowed poor Juliette to assume all the responsibility of their expenses, and, though he groaned to see her labor for herself and for him, he had only strength to complain, and not enough to do anything.

One friend alone could influence his melancholy spirit or direct his actions. Roger was of the same age as Robert; but, possessing a repulsive countenance, squinting eyes and a raucous voice, he had already lost the appearance of youth. He came from Paris, and was reported to be the son of parents in easy circumstances; but there was no evidence of wealth about him, and while vaunting himself as knowing everything and everybody, and as being able to make himself useful in any kind of industry, he had already been discharged by several business firms who had not been satisfied with his conduct.

How could such a man influence Robert, when he would not listen to the wise words of sweet Juliette? Feeble minds are always easily governed and controlled by the sophisms of clever people who flatter their peculiarities, and at the same time they often remain untouched by the dictates of reason or friendship.

Roger could not view with indifference Juliette's charms. Under his rude exterior he hid a heart corroded with envy and jealousy of those whose good qualities and natural advantages made more apparent his own vices and imperfections. Never seeking to overcome his passions, he nurtured them in secret, while using all his art to conceal them. He naturally hated Adrien, and his hatred acquired new virulence when he saw that young Dalmont was loved by Juliette.

Juliette had received Roger's declarations of love with fright; the very sight of him inspired her with a secret horror; nor would she have listened to him for a moment, had he not been her brother's friend. Things were in this state when the Dalmont brothers received news of the inheritance which had fallen to them. This event was received with delight by the whole country-side, for everyone loved the two young men. Adrien was at the summit of happiness, because he could now make his Juliette happy; and the latter said to herself, "My brother cannot refuse me now to him I love, and I shall be his wife in spite of that horrid Roger."

"How happy they are!" said Robert, on learning the news. "They are rich; such good fortune does not come to me who am ruined."

Roger said nothing, nor did he allow his real sentiments to appear; he complimented the brothers upon their good fortune, and ceased to speak to

Juliette of his love; but he became still more intimate with Robert, and they were inseparable.

The Dalmont brothers had long since completed the arrangements which should put them in possession of their fortune, and each one had planned his future. They waited in momentary expectation that their property would pass into their hands, Georges to make the tour of the world, and Adrien to marry.

The lovers had arranged the manner of their life together; they would buy a pretty house which was at that time for sale. The product of their lands would satisfy all their needs. They could cultivate their tiny domain in peace, and Adrien and Juliette would have nothing to fear from adversity.

The heritage arrived at last. The two brothers received their bills of exchange, which they realized, and then divided the eighty thousand francs, which would enable each to follow his fancy and assure his future.

Georges had already made his preparations for departure, and on the eve of the day on which he was to leave his brother, the two young men invited their friends to accompany them on a little country excursion. Juliette, of course, was there; she was already regarded as Adrien's wife. Robert was invited; but he refused to accept the invitation, and no one was surprised at this, because they knew his sombre character, which led him to avoid society.

The day passed gayly; the guests rode, danced and sang; Georges promised his friends to return when he had discovered another hemisphere and given to it his name; Adrien besought his brother to share his happiness sometimes; and, full of delightful projects, they returned to the village.

Night fell at last; the two brothers took Juliette home, and then returned to their own dwelling. They lived in a little house, situated on the edge of the village and encircled with fens and gardens. Here they had left their money, confident as to its safety, because they were in their birthplace, and believed themselves in the midst of their friends.

But misfortune struck them like a thunderclap; their fortune had been stolen from them. The secretary in which their money had been locked had been broken open and everything taken. They hastened to the village and informed the magistrates, and this event spread the alarm through the entire neighborhood, that thieves had entered the house of the young Dalmonts and had robbed them. Some pitied the two brothers, and many condemned their imprudence. Every conceivable means was used to discover the thieves, but without success; and it was firmly believed that some tramp or pedler had committed the crime. The two brothers were ruined. Georges took his reverses easily. He sold the little which remained, gave half of it to his brother, and went away, de-

claring that he would never come back unless he returned a millionaire. Adrien felt his loss more deeply. It was not the money alone which he regretted; but Juliette, his sweetheart, soon to have been his bride — could he now ask her to share his poverty? She was always the same to him, — tender, loving, as of old; she remained true to her lover. But Robert gave the young man to distinctly understand that he could not marry his sister until he had the means of supporting her.

"Promise that you will be faithful to me," said Adrien to his sweetheart; "swear that you will love me always, that your feelings will not change; then I can go away courageously, and win an honorable place, so that I may be worthy of you."

Juliette thought Adrien already worthy of her; sighing at her brother's injustice, she promised without hesitation all that her lover asked. Adrien embraced his sweetheart, and, giving his hand to Robert, begged him to take good care of Juliette. Robert bowed; he could scarcely articulate his reply, and the hand that clasped Adrien's was moist and trembling.

CHAPTER XII

Conclusion of Adrien's Story

Very few months had passed after Adrien's departure when Roger gave out that he must go to Paris in order to facilitate the consummation of some very important business matters. He had, so he said, received news that a very wealthy relative had gone into a business which was likely to prove lucrative, and wished to make him a sharer in some profitable speculations. He proposed to Robert that he accompany him and tempt fortune under his tutelage; and, to everyone's astonishment, the taciturn and moody Robert accepted, and went to the city with his friend Roger.

Juliette was thus left alone in the cottage, where she employed her solitude in dreaming and thinking of Adrien, of whom she heard from time to time. She learned that he was distinguishing himself in his chosen profession, that he had already been promoted, and that before long, no doubt, he would attain at least a lieutenancy. Her ambition did not go further than his gradual advancement in his regiment; she thought that her brother would not refuse to allow her to marry a

man in this position, and she nursed her courage with this sweet hope and was thus able to endure the sorrow of her lover's absence.

After an absence of six months, Robert and Roger returned to Juliette, having prospered very well in their business. Roger had conducted some very successful speculations, it was said, and had been of great assistance to Robert, who had also made money. Roger bought the very house of which Adrien had hoped to become the owner, and Juliette's brother acquired a little property near that of his friend.

Robert's new fortune did not seem to conduce to his happiness; he was as melancholy as ever. There were even moments when he was the victim of a fright of which no one could divine the cause; he trembled and shook at the slightest sound, at the most natural question.

Juliette did all that lay in her power to restore calm and contentment to her brother's mind. But when she interrogated him as to the cause of his terror, of his sorrow, now that fortune smiled upon him, Robert left her abruptly, without making reply.

Roger appeared more satisfied with his position, and began again to make love to Juliette. He followed her wherever she went; he became her shadow, haunting her in all her pursuits. "I have never loved you," said Juliette to him, "and I adore Adrien."

"Adrien no longer thinks of you," said Roger; "he will never return."

"Adrien will always be faithful to me, — I am sure of that; but, even if he should forget me, I would never marry you."

"You will marry me, however," responded Roger, looking at the sweet girl with a glance which was both passionate and determined. "You shall marry me; I swear it."

Juliette trembled and shivered. She complained to her brother of his hateful persecutions, but Robert listened to her in silence; sometimes tears moistened his eyelids, half-stifled sighs escaped from his breast, but he did not try to console her.

Two years had rolled away since Adrien's departure, and each day Juliette prayed that Heaven would restore her lover; for each day her position became less supportable. Roger unceasingly dogged her footsteps, and grew more arrogant and determined in his project of marrying her. He did not pay his court as a timid lover, but as a man who threatened, who terrified, who was certain that he could make himself obeyed. Juliette would no longer endure this torture, and requested her brother to forbid Roger to aspire to her hand; then for the first time Robert himself told her that she must marry Roger.

"Marry Roger, and forget Adrien! Never! never!" cried Juliette. "I will be faithful to the one I love until I go to my grave."

"You must forget your promises, and forget Adrien," replied Robert. "If you do not marry Roger I am ruined."

"Ruined! What do you mean? Why should you be afraid of Roger?"

"I have every reason to fear him if you do not become his wife."

Robert went quickly away, leaving the unfortunate Juliette a prey to the most dreadful fears. To forget Adrien was an impossibility. She would rather die than marry Roger; but what could be the dangers that threatened her brother? What could he dread from this man who had been his friend and to whom he owed his fortune? Juliette sought in vain to divine this secret, racking her brain for suggestions, but able to form only the vaguest conjectures.

On the day following this conversation with Robert, Juliette retired to her chamber and tried in vain to sleep. Wishing to breathe for a moment the fresh air of the country, in the hope that it would calm her distress, she rose in the middle of the night and opened her window which looked out on the garden, and was very near the ground. A voice which she recognized as Robert's broke the stillness of the night. To whom could Robert be speaking at that hour? Juliette listened. She thought her own name was mentioned. Soon she distinguished Roger's tones. They were speaking of her. The desire to know

their secret and to discover their plans overcame her fear; she left her room very quietly, and walked softly to a thick clump of shrubbery in which Roger and her brother were seated, and, holding her breath for fear of being discovered, heard all their conversation.

"I've endured this too long," said Roger; "it must end."

"It is not my fault," said Robert in a trembling voice. "I have spoken very firmly to her."

"Speaking is not sufficient; you know very well how obstinate she is. But, Heavens! we have the means of controlling her. You can command her; you are her brother, and she ought to obey you."

"I told her my intentions yesterday."

"But that is not enough; she must be compelled to yield."

"I have no right to compel her against her will."

"You have not the right! You are too feeble and undecided; it is necessary to have a little decision in a case like this. You must realize, Robert, that if I do not marry your sister, I have the power to ruin you, and I will use it."

"But it will ruin you also."

"No, I shall first fly; I shall put myself beyond the reach of pursuit before I denounce you, and I shall send an accusation to the magistrates, which you will not be able to swear away."

"Wretch! In what a frightful position you have placed me!"

"I warned you plainly; you had not a penny and you did not wish to work. Well, I enriched you — and myself also, it is true; we divided like good comrades. You should thank me, instead of reproaching me. You are ungrateful!"

"My heart is filled with remorse and the fear of discovery."

"As to that, you know we are perfectly safe; no one suspects our secret. We run no risk whatever, so your remorse is very foolish."

"What you say is true, but I shall never know peace again; I can never endure the presence of Adrien, who will return to this country."

"He will not do so when he knows that your sister is married."

"Unhappy Adrien! Must I deprive you of your love, after stealing from you everything that you possessed?"

Robert was interrupted by a cry at a little distance; the two men hurried from the shrubbery, and found Juliette stretched unconscious upon the ground a few steps from them.

"It is my sister!" cried Robert; "it is my poor sister!"

"Yes," said Roger, in a gloomy tone. "She has heard everything; without doubt she has heard all. It is now more than ever necessary that she should marry me."

On regaining consciousness, Juliette dared not look either at her brother or Roger. The sight of both filled her with horror. She could not endure the thought of living with the wretches who had robbed Adrien and Georges, but she felt some pity for her brother, when she saw that his heart was torn by remorse.

"You know our secret," said Roger to her. "Do you still wish to refuse my hand? I can ruin your brother, dishonor your family name, and I will do this if you will not marry me, even if I ruin myself with you."

Juliette knew that Roger was capable of carrying out his threats. She groaned at the very thought of giving her hand to such a monster; but on the other hand she could not support the idea of seeing her unhappy brother accused, dragged before the tribunals, and the name of their virtuous father dishonored forever.

Robert stood before his sister, pale and trembling. He dared not ask her to save him; he had a horror of himself; he felt unworthy of her pity; and Juliette, when she saw his suffering, decided to save her brother and sacrifice herself by marrying Roger.

The marriage was decided. In a week longer Juliette, the charming Juliette, would become the wife of a monster soiled with crimes. One of the most beautiful works of nature would be allied with one of the most repulsive. The unfortunate

woman awaited this moment as the condemned criminal awaits the day of execution.

It was just at this time that Adrien returned, full of hope and love. He had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and had saved a little money. He had availed himself of a short furlough to come and ask of Robert the hand of his sister, seeing no further obstacle to his marriage with Juliette. When he entered his native village, his first care was to ask news of his sweetheart. "In a week," they told him, "she is to marry Roger." Juliette unfaithful, and for Roger! "They are deceiving me," said Adrien. "I will never believe this until I hear it from Juliette's lips."

Adrien learned Juliette's new address. He ran, he flew, he crossed the village like a madman; finally he entered, he stood before Juliette, and he could scarcely recognize her, her sweet features were so altered by anguish and tears and suffering.

Juliette gave a cry of joy. She was about to throw herself into his arms; then she realized her situation, and sank broken-hearted and melancholy on to a chair. "My Juliette," said Adrien, flinging himself on his knees before her, "I love you more than ever. Why these tears, this melancholy? What has changed you? You do not run to meet me, you do not respond to my greeting. O Heaven! have they told me the truth?"

"Yes," responded Juliette in a scarcely articulate voice, "I am to marry Roger."

"You are to marry Roger! You are unfaithful to me!"

"Ah, I have never ceased to love you for a moment, but it must be — I cannot tell you — I must marry Roger."

"Then this is the reward of my love and my constancy. You are false, and you are not ashamed to confess it; you have simply made game of my misery. I return your vows, and your letters, in which you professed a tenderness you did not feel for me. Marry Roger; you are worthy of him!"

So saying, Adrien left, without deigning to look at Juliette. Oh, if he had seen her, broken-hearted, almost dying, he could not have left her so!

Juliette's mind almost gave way under the severity of the blow; the misery of her situation was already almost insupportable, and to hear herself accused of infidelity by Adrien, to hear him renounce her, to lose at the same time his esteem and his love! The unhappy girl had succumbed to her grief when Robert returned to her. He had learned that Adrien was in the village, and, more anxious, more fearful, than ever, he came to Juliette's side as if to find a shelter there from Adrien's vengeance. He found his sister plunged in the depths of despair, and heard her sobbingly

pronounce the name of her lover, and vow that she could no longer bear to live. The sight of her despair racked Robert's heart, already tortured by remorse; he felt himself unworthy of the sacrifice Juliette had made, and groaned as he thought that the ingenuous, beautiful and virtuous girl would be given to a man stained with crime.

"Be comforted, Juliette," he said; "dry your tears. You shall see Adrien again. You may yet be happy. It is my duty to sacrifice all for you."

But Juliette did not hear him; his consoling words did not reach her heart, which Adrien's visit had just torn.

Roger also had heard of Adrien's return, and foresaw the untoward results that would follow for him. He feared Juliette's love and Robert's remorse, and he dreaded also the fury of his rival. He felt that he could never be happy in the possession of his fortune or his wife while Adrien lived; and, since crime did not dismay him when bent on gratifying his passions, he decided upon the death of his rival.

On leaving Juliette, Adrien had quitted the village, and, walking at haphazard, directed his steps toward a wood near by. There he gave way to his sorrow and to the tears which he had restrained in Juliette's presence; ceasing to stifle his regrets and his love, he allowed himself to cherish the image of her whom he still loved,

despite the perfidy of which he firmly believed her guilty.

As night came on, a fearful storm broke forth; the thunder rolled, its detonations repeated by the echoes of the forest, which was illumined at times by the lightning, which flashed through its black recesses. Adrien remained in the wood, absorbed in his sorrow; the disorder of nature had no power to affright him; in his present mood the fury of the elements was akin to his spirit.

At midnight Robert left his home to seek the victim whom he had despoiled, and to whom he wished to confess his crime, hoping to obtain his pardon, and knowing Adrien well enough to be certain that the fault of the brother would not alter his sentiment for the sister.

Adrien was supposed to be spending the night in the cabin of a wood-cutter, located in the forest; such was at least the information which Robert had received in the morning, and he decided to go there, choosing purposely an hour when no one could see him, and flattering himself that the conversation he should have with Adrien would remain forever a secret, and that Roger especially would have no suspicion of it.

The hope of relieving his tortured soul of its weight of remorse lent energy to this man, ordinarily so feeble and craven. He walked with a firm step in spite of the storm which raged about him, and soon neared the outskirts of the wood.

But Roger was watching also. The wretched man had waited for night and silence, that he might attack his victim with impunity. During the day he had taken pains to discover the route taken by Adrien, and, when darkness and mystery seemed to promise him impunity, he directed his steps toward the cabin, which he hoped to enter easily without awakening the wood-cutter.

Roger walked cautiously, fearing to be heard, and paused at the slightest sound which struck his ear. At a turn of the path a flash of lightning disclosed to him a man who was walking hurriedly. He listened, he remained immovable; the man passed near him. The name of Juliette escaped painfully from his breast. Roger did not doubt that this was his rival. Who else but Adrien would still be in the wood?

He hastened his steps; he reached his victim. "Die!" said he. He struck, and Robert fell at his feet, bathed in blood!

At the cry which the unfortunate man gave as the blow fell, the assassin recognized his mistake; he fled, furious that he had missed his rival. The death of Robert destroyed all hope of his possessing Juliette. He swore as he fled that Adrien should not be happier than he.

Robert still breathed, and his groans reached the ear of Adrien, rousing him from his profound despair. However unfortunate one may be, one finds an alleviation of his suffering in succoring

He listened, he remained immovable; the man passed near him.

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others in distress; unhappiness does not lessen our sensibility, as good fortune does sometimes.

Adrien's steps were guided by the groans which he heard; he approached the dying man, but how astonished was he to discover in this man Robert, Juliette's brother! Alone, in the middle of the night, in a wood during a raging storm, who would come to aid him in succoring this unfortunate man? Adrien called aloud; he made the wood resound with the echoes of his cries; only the storm replied. He knelt before the injured man and sought in vain to restore him, to bind his wounds. Robert opened his eyes and recognized the soft voice of Adrien.

"You come to save me!" he exclaimed; "you implore the pity of Heaven for me! Dear Adrien, I am unworthy of your kindness. I am the one who has caused all your misfortune. I have merited my death; but I shall die less unhappy if you will pardon me."

"Whatever your sins may be," said Adrien, "I must forget them, and think only of helping you. You cannot remain in the wood; I will carry you to the wood-cutter's hut; there we shall find help."

"It is needless," said Robert, in an expiring tone; "my moments are numbered. Let me employ them in confessing my crime. That alone will diminish my suffering. The sight of nature on fire, of the conflict of the elements, is not ter-

rifying to one who is looking into the depths of the tomb."

Adrien, forced by necessity to yield to Robert's desires, knelt beside him and listened in silence to the story which Juliette's brother narrated.

"You know, Adrien," he said, "the ruin which involved my parents changed my character. Owing to the indulgence of my father, who yielded to all of my wishes, I was unaccustomed to the thought of working to supply my needs, and when I was thrown suddenly upon my own resources, crippled by disappointment and the shame I experienced in realizing how I had wasted my early years, I could not recall that energy which inspires a man to repair his errors, and I gave way to discouragement and lassitude.

"Roger alone, the perfidious Roger, had the power to distract me. In feigning to pity me, he flattered my idleness, saying, often, 'You were born rich; a misfortune has ruined you, but another turn of the wheel will enrich you; fortune has still something in store for you.'

"It was just at this time that you and your brother inherited a fortune, and I blush to confess that I felt nothing but envy at your good luck. Roger never left me, and his false and wicked sentiments had gradually corrupted my heart.

"'The moment has arrived,' he said to me one day, 'when we can both repair the wrongs that

fortune has inflicted upon us, regain what we have lost. The brothers Dalmont have received a considerable sum, upon which they did not count, and which, therefore, they can very well do without. Help me, and this sum will pass into our hands, where it will be much better placed than in those of two heedless fools, who do not know its value.'

"At first this proposition shocked me, but soon I began to listen to it without horror; I dared even calculate the chances of success. Ah, dear Adrien, when one meditates crime, one is already guilty.

"How shall I tell you the result? Basely yielding, during the day of your fête, I introduced myself with Roger into your home, and aided him to despoil my friend. This is the end to which a cowardly weakness, a distaste for work, and a love of ease, which I dignified by the fine name of independence, had led me.

"But since that moment, far from being happy, I have not known a moment of ease. In the daytime I have read suspicion of my crime upon every face; in all the people I met I saw accusers. At night sleep fled from my eyelids, and when all were wrapped in repose about me, I felt myself surrounded by people who watched to arrest me; the flight of a bird, a breath of wind, the faintest movement of the foliage, seemed to whisper the accusing words, 'It is he who robbed Adrien.'

"But this was not enough; a more cruel suffering was reserved for me. Roger, the infamous Roger, wished to marry Juliette; I must sacrifice my sister, see her tears and her despair without pity, and condemn her to unhappiness, to purchase the silence of my accomplice. Then Juliette discovered my horrible secret. Imagine her grief, her position. Cease to believe her unfaithful; she was about to sacrifice herself for me. But such a union was impossible. Today, overcome by the despair of Juliette, I came in search of you, to confess all to you. Roger is my assassin, but I can die happy, for Juliette will not be his wife. Dear Adrien, she is yours; ah, say that you forgive me, and I shall die in peace."

Adrien had listened with the most lively emotion to Robert's recital, often interrupted by moments of weakness, and the sufferings which the unhappy man strove to overcome, that he might tell all to Adrien, who shed tears in remembering the reproaches he had showered upon Juliette.

"Yes," said he at last to Robert, "I forgive you; your repentance must efface your fault. Roger alone is a monster whom I ought to punish. But calm your remorse; you can still hope."

"No, Adrien, all is ended for me; I feel it. This confession has exhausted my forces. — But you have forgiven me; comfort now my poor sister, that she may not curse the memory of her brother."

Robert's head fell back on the wet grass. He was dead. Adrien remained motionless for some moments before the corpse of the unfortunate man; but the thought of Juliette reminded him that he had other duties to fulfil. He must comfort her; he must devote himself entirely to her. He broke several branches, with which he covered Robert's body, and then left the wood to seek Juliette, that he might apprise her of her brother's death. But on approaching the village an unusual light smote his eyes. The heavens seemed alight. One could distinguish houses, streets, and the terrible light appeared with each instant to increase. Adrien redoubled his pace, driven by a fear for which he could not account. The village people had arisen, and were running in crowds toward the same point. The dreadful cry of "Fire! fire!" resounded on all sides, and struck terror to Adrien's heart; a secret presentiment drew him to Juliette's dwelling. The flames indeed rose from that spot and burned with violence, in the midst of this night of storm which threatened to consume the unfortunate country.

"Juliette! Juliette!" cried Adrien. No voice responded, but someone pointed to the house. It was there he must seek Juliette. He rushed through the crowd at the entrance of the burning building. He ran from room to room; the smoke blinded him; he could see nothing; he called aloud on his beloved; at last a voice, calling

"Robert," reached him. Juliette was searching for her brother and trying to save him.

Adrien reached her at last, and, seizing her in his arms as she lost consciousness, still murmuring her brother's name, he carried her through the flames to a place of safety.

The house was totally destroyed, nor was anything saved which had belonged to Juliette and her brother. The fire was attributed to the lightning, which had struck in several localities, and notably upon the body of the unfortunate Robert, which was found the next day, reduced to cinders, in the wood.

Juliette alone knew the truth. Apprised by Adrien of the sorrowful end of her brother, she experienced a sentiment of joy, in learning of his repentance and knowing that Adrien had forgiven him. Roger had fled the country. Nothing was left to Juliette; but she herself was all to her lover, who soon became her husband, and they then left a spot which recalled too vividly to Juliette her brother and Roger.

Adrien obtained his discharge, as he did not wish to be separated any longer from a wife whose feeble and delicate health demanded all his care. The violent shocks sustained by Juliette had attacked her vital forces; the idea of her union with Roger, the death of her brother and the burning of the house had overcome the unfortunate woman, and, though happy in the arms of her

husband, Juliette sighed still sometimes, as if surprised that she could know happiness.

The married couple settled in Paris, where Adrien found employment, the income of which sufficed for their needs. Juliette became a mother, but she died at the birth of her son; and Adrien, who had lost with her all hope of happiness, felt that he must live for her son, who became the sole object of his care. He renounced all pleasure to educate the boy, who loved his father, and responded to the pains taken with his education. When he was about ten years old, he was one day walking with his father, when they were stopped by a beggar asking alms. Adrien, struck by the man's voice, looked at him attentively, and recognized Roger under the wretched rags which covered him. Adrien could not repress a sentiment of joy. "At least," he said, "his crime has not prospered."

Roger fled as soon as he knew whom he had accosted, and some years afterward died on the scaffold.

Adrien grew old, satisfied to see Adolphe respond to his hopes. If the young man was a little heedless and sometimes too susceptible to the ladies, he possessed the qualities of a man of honor, and had only the faults of his age.

Adrien wished to place his son in an office; but a young man who has nothing cannot spend two or three years waiting for promotion, and Adolphe